



aint incredible

Perfect the fine art of digital painting. Top fantasy artists from around the globe reveal all inside... Northings stort on page 67

ALL THIS AND LEARN TO PAINT LIKE THE MAN BEHIND STAR WARS!



ImagineFX

EDITORIAL +44 (0) 1225 442244 ROB 'FRODO' CARNEY EDITOR

STEVE 'LEGOLAS' GOTOBED SENIOR ART EDITOR

ALEX 'EOWYN' MORSS PRODUCTION EDITOR
TOM 'GOLLUM' RUDDERHAM DVD EDITOR

DVD PROBLEMS +44 (0) 1225 822743

n Berriman, Martin Bland, Saxon Bullock Adam Benton, Ian Berriman, Martin Bland, Saxon Bullock, Ryan Church, Dave Curd, Marta Dahlig, Jonny Juddle, Marcelo Furquim, Dom Hall, George Hull, Frazer Irving, Todd Lockwood, Henning Ludvigaen, Mark Penfold, Ed Ricketts, Rob Scott, Don Seegmiller, Becky Skuse, Mattias Snyag, Simon Spurrier, Steven Stahiberg, Tim Warnock, Kai Wood, Esther Woodman, Josonia Zhou

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PHOTOGRAPHY Future Photography Studio

ADVERTISING +44 (0) 1225 788182 ROSA SMITH senior advertising manage

ANDREW TILBURY key account manager andrew.tilbury@futurenet.co.uk

NEJLA UNAL classified sales executive

MANAGEMENT

KELLEY CORTEN publisher DOM BEAVEN publishing director JIM DOUGLAS editorial director NICK MERRITT group senior editor IAN MILLER group art director FIONA TULLY marketing manager CLARE SCOTT production manager

NOLA COKELY ad production co-ordinator

MARK ANSON production co-ordinator MICHELLE ROGERS operational purchasing manager

Imaginer X Subscriptions, Future Publishing RLSC-SXSE-SKKT, Unit 4 Tower House, So Market Harborough, Leicester LE16 9EF SUBSCRIPTION QUERIES 0870 837 4722

OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTIONS +44 1858 438794 CIRCULATION & LICENSING

JASON COMBER trade marketing manager TIM HUDSON head of international licensing SIMON WEAR international director

Marketforce (UK) Ltd +44 (0) 20 7633 3333 Sth Floor, Low Rise Building, Kings Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE19LS

ROGER PARRY non-executive chairman

ROGER PARRY non-executive chairman GREG INGHAM chief executive ROBERT PRICE managing director UK JOHN BOWMAN group finance director T+44 (0) 1225 442 244 URL: www.futureplc.com

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Featured artists

Every month, ImagineFX calls on the finest digital artists in the world to offer you the best guidance and share their techniques and inspiration...



Marta Dahlig



This month. Polish artist Marta Dahliq is the focus of our Rising Stars feature, beginning

on page 44. She also shares her secrets for painting perfect portraits in an exclusive ImagineFX workshop, beginning on page 84. And don't forget to check out her high-res source files on your free DVD and her image on your poster...

www.blackeri.com



Kuang Hong



There are not many artists that leave us absolutely speachless with every piece they

produce, but Kuang Hong is one of them. We meet the uber-talented 25-year old on page 56 and discover the inspiration behind his stunning artwork. You'll find one of his pieces on your free double-sided poster, inside this magazine

www.zemotion.net/noah



Chris Foss



Chris engineered the look of early sci-fi films and has created some legendary futuristic art. He

worked on Dune, Superman and Alien, and has done art for just about every classic sci-fi author. He trained as an architect but digressed before the end of his degree into drawing cartoon strips for Penthouse and then illustrated The Joy of Sex.

www.chrisfoss.net



Martin Bland



This month, we bundled UK concept artist Martin Bland into an old disused warehouse, took

his picture and then asked him to share his techniques (workshop begins on page 68). And he still didn't mind talking to us for hours on his inspirations, and the meanings behind his haunting apocolyptic visions. Read all about the artist on page 48.

www.spyroteknik.com



Joanna Zhou



The awardwinning manga artist from UKbased Sweatdrop Studios takes a long, hard look at

e-frontier's latest release -Manga Studio 3 - this issue. Find out what she thinks of the new release in our exclusive review, beginning on page 102. Look out for Joanna's Manga Studio tutorial, coming soon in ImagineFX.

www.chocolatepixels.com



Adam Benton



A man with a passion for sci-fi and fantasy art and Bryce, Adam Benton achieves the

remarkable this issue as he creates a futuristic city from scratch using Daz's tool. You'll find all the files you need to follow the workshop on your free DVD. Look out for next issue when Adam turns his hand to creating a magical fantasy scene.

www.kromekat.com



Welcome! What a response...



If you were one of the hundreds of people who contacted me since we launched this magazine around four weeks ago, then I thank you. Your feedback and opinions on the content of ImagineFX is what will shape it over time. I'll read every email that comes in personally...

If you happened to miss last issue, let

DIGITAL AR

me explain what we're all about at ImagineFX. The idea is simple – to unite a global community of fantasy and sci-fi artists through stunning artwork, insightful interviews and inspirational workshops. There's also a free DVD every issue, featuring high-resolution artwork from some of the world's leading painters.

This month, we're continuing what we started in issue one. We have a massive workshops section, containing in-depth tutorials from the likes of Martin Bland (page 68), Ryan Church (page 78) and Marta Dahlig (page 84) that will inspire and teach you some of the most sought-after techniques in the fantasy art community. In addition, there's interviews with Martin Bland (awarded our monthly 'Master of Art' prize) and the

incredibly talented Kuang Hong. I await your comments...

Rob Carney, Editor rob@imaginefx.com

Tell us what you think!

ImagineFX Magazine, Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW Tel: +44 (0) 1225 442244 Email: mail@imaginefx.com Subscriptions: + 870 837 4722 Overseas: +44 1858 438 794

Subscribe now! Turn to page 35

United States readers turn to page 77

Five things...

you'll discover in this issue of ImagineFX

Just like Camille Kuo. Send your work into our FXPosé reader gallery and we might just select your image to adorn our cover. Page 10

Promote yourself
Set up an online gallery, and get
active in the fantasy art
community. Find out who has made it
by sharing their ideas! Page 22

Concept heaven
Leading concept artist Ryan
Church shares his secrets for
creating dynamic concept art in
Painter IX Page 78

Perfect faces
Paint lifelike portraits using
Photoshop and Painter in our
exclusive workshop from top Polish
artist Marta Dahlig Page 84



Space attack!
Find out how Ivana B. Yoozd –
The Meddlesome Muse, our
new comic creation, is escaping from
the brain of a troubled artist
(and zapping some bug-eyed aliens on
the way). Page 114



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"Harness the power of Photoshop's brushes for masterful illustrations like this Troll" Jonny Duddle (page 72)



The Meddlesome Muse

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Reader EPOSÉ THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Rafi Adrian Zulkarnain

LOCATION: Indonesia
WEB: www.solidgrafi.cjb.net/
EMAIL: solidgrafi@yahoo.com
QOETWARE: Photoshop, 3ds max-



Though he has a background in traditional media, Rafi likes to mix it up with 3D and 2D computer graphics.

"My style of art developed from natural, through surreal, to fantasy art," he explains.

Like many artists, Rafi finds the technical nature of 30 a little restrictive. "So right now I'm focusing more on 2D." But he acknowledges: "It's not only technique that matters, idea are important too. There must be a balance."

HIGH PRIESTESS The High Priestess a bit like a moon goddess. She's a vine example of Rafi's mastery of 2D digital media.

BIRDS OF PREY One of Rafi's first works for 2006, also in 2D. "I'm 'nostponing 3D until the technology offers more freedom and usability," he adds.



ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Rafi Adrian Zulkarnain wins a copy of Exotique, showcasing the world's best CG females, and Painter, featuring the latest and greatest Corel Painter art. Find out more at:

www.ballisticpublishing.com.







Francis Tsai

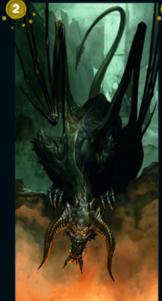
LOCATION: US
WEB: www.teamgt.com
EMAIL: tsai@teamgt.com
SOFTWARE: Adobe Photoshop 7.0

Francis grew up in a small west Texas town. He's been drawing as long as he can remember. He now works as lead concept artist for High Moon Studios in California, as well as doing freelance art and design work for the role playing industry, comics, film and television. He also has degrees in chemistry and architecture.

BIKER "I'm one of five concept at the company. Once in a while, we each illustrate our take on some common theme or subject," explains Francis. "In this case the exercise was centred on the theme of vehicles and the undead."

ORAGON Created for Wizards of the Coast, this creature is known as Rhashaak of Haka'torvhak, and is featured in the Dungeons and Dragons book, Eberron Explorer's Handbook.

MACROTUS Another extra jourricular exercise. This time the basis was a well known comic book character. "I tried to imagine how a character like that might appear to someone who had no idea who or what he was about," says Francis.











LOCATION: US
WEB: www.chrisjanderson.com
EMAIL: praxuschris@yahoo.com



Although he first got into fantasy and sci-fi art through movies such as Indiana Jones and Alien, video games had the

video games had the strongest impact on Chris: "Especially the more story-based, fantasy oriented ones. My style has developed from being incredibly cartoonish to being more realistic but without loosing that style," he says. "Today, I continue to push myself with understanding and challenging realism with styles that will make people perceive the images I create in a different light."

THE COLDEST DAY This bruised wyoman is trying to escape from shadow-like phantoms. "Being chased by wicked beings makes this the coldest day she will ever have."

AFFAIRE DE COEUR OF THE YOUNG "This is about a feeling of infatuation that one has for another." says Chris. "In this case, a young boy falls for a girl he's drawn. "And then he finds her."

ORC WARRIOR GARDREGON
While studying rapid painting
methods, Chris wanted to "create a
feeling of strength and terror with a
powerful-looking character."









Loish van Baarle

OCATION: Netherlands
WEB: http://loish.net
EMAIL: loisvb@pandora.be
SOFTWARE: Photoshop 7, Painter 7,
OpenCanvas 1.1



Loish cites a mixture of Disney, art nouveau and anime as forming her main stylistic inspirations. "I'm

driven by a desire to capture the sense of energy, decoration and atmosphere these art styles have," she says. Working with digital media in one form or another since the age of 14, Loish relies on the traditional combination of Intuos2 and Photoshop. "The ability this gives to tweak colours, add textures and layer endlessly have been a crucial element in the development of my style," she adds.

SUMMER "This image was inspired by the atmosphere of summer sunsets and street performers on the boulevards of the south of France," says Loish. "It was also my first digital work done in Painter 7."

JANELARGE This is Loish's interpretation of a porcelain maskclad character called Keratin Jane, created by Heather Caulberg for White Wolf's RPG Changeling: The Dreaming. (See www.deviantart.com/ deviation/21247773/). "She wears porcelain masks and is meant to have a mysterious and slightly creepy appearance," says Loish.









Camille Kuo

LOCATION: US
WEB: http://camilkuo.com/main.htm
EMAIL: camilkuo @ hotmail.com
OFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter-end
Paint 885



This issue's front cover artist, Camille, began drawing comics secretly when she was a young

teenager, for her own entertainment. She recalls: "I thought I would never be allowed to become an artist - there was a strong view that art was low class and useless!" However, her parents helped her out when she moved to the United States to continue her education. "They have now accepted me as an artist," she smiles.

DRAGON AND PHOENIX OF ANCIENT CHINA "I've always been interested in ancient China," says Camille. "The dragon and phoenix have represented the emperors throughout Chinese history."

KING OF THE BEAST Another Chinese subject. "This one is basically influenced by one of the creatures in the famous book, Journey to the West," explains Camille.





Chris Mills
LOCATION: Scotland
EMAIL: mills.cloy@btinternet.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop 7, Bryce 4,
Poser 5, Paint Shop Pro, Cadvance 99



'It's probably a cliché, but at 14 I read Tolkien, came across Roger Dean's views and was hooked," says Chris. He pools his

architectural background and CAD talents with his painting. "The postproduction in Photoshop gets me a finished piece for reproduction while the original long hand goes on the wall."

SMAUG COMES TO THE LONELY MOUNTAIN "A scene I've been wanting to do for ages," says Chris. "The Hobbit's main baddie makes his first appearance." The landscape was generated in Bryce, with a rough dragon created to get the look right.

THE LODGE A personal favourite for Chris. "Although my style has changed, I still think it works. The owls were added as an afterthought but they make the picture."

BRIDGE OF DREAMS "I made this from scratch. The rather impractical architecture was built in 3D using my archaic Cadvance program – it will stand up, honest." Surprisingly, the wolf was a Poser figure, "with a lot of photo reference."









James Paick

LOCATION: US
WEB: www.jamespaick.com
EMAIL: jpaick@yahoo.com
OCETWARE: Photoshop CS, Mac G5

James picked up a pencil at an early age and copied anything that he thought was intriguing. "My art became a voice for me to communicate, to just let loose and have fun," he remembers. In terms of subject matter, he just did whatever art came naturally. Now he works full time as an illustrator and art director in entertainment advertising, working on many game titles and films. James is not one to let the grass grow under his feet: "I also juggle many freelance projects ranging from video game concept designs to graphic novels."

DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN This digital matte shows off James' futurescape capabilities perfectly.

CATHEDRAL A concept illustration in the space opera style.

WATERFALL FORT A work that depicts a kind of future idyll we might enjoy.







Andreas N. Grøntved

LOCATION: Denmark WEB: http://www.sota.dk AIL: dreaz@sota.dk SOFTWARE: Photoshop



"The path of my life has been very simple," says Andreas. "From the day I

got a pencil in my hands,
I've been working my way
towards the creative industries." But
the route was not without its twists and turns: "I've always been told by my parents that I should get a useful parents that I should get a useful education before I consider animation, design and illustration," he adds. Andreas compiled, dutifully. "Iregret it from time to time," he admits. "But right now I'm working on the final piece for my decay in phase to salination." for my degree in character animation." This is a cause of great happiness "It's been the best 31 years of my life". His next major decision will be whether to head for film or games.

MAN_ROBOT "This guy has become immune towards any form of media, especially commercials," explains Andreas. "The seller-robot on the wall is offering choco-barios for 7 kr-units."

ROBOT_TRAIN This is a personal avourite for Andreas: "The robot is escaping a direct attack from a rocketbox in the area. Unfortunately it hits a bridge and a train while trying to out dodge the rockets."

ROBOT_HILL This tumbling droid would normally be at the focal point of the image. "But instead I focused in on the fall," he explains, which he says was tricky to pull off. "The result is quite wierd but interesting to look at."







Steve Holt
LOCATION: US
WEB: http://genero-3dart.com
EMAIL: steve_hlt@yahoo.com
OCETWARE: Painter 9



As a boy growing up in the south east of England, Steve would spend much of his free time daydreaming,

drawing and painting.
Inspired by classic sci-fi books and movies, he has always enjoyed using his imagination to explore the fantastical. Why sci-fi? Steve replies: "I like using my imagination to create artwork that no-one has seen before." Steve worked as a 3D artist in the UK computer games industry before moving to the US as a freelance 2D/3D digital artist.

ESCAPE FROM FIRE MOUNTAIN
This piece was painted just for fun. **L depicts a young couple trying to escape boiling rivers of lava and the giant creatures set free by the volcanic eruptions," says Steve.

MOON CANYON "Over the years I've seen various fantasy and sci-fi artists paint the classic image of the beautiful babe astride the giant beast," muses Steve. "Well this is my version of that popular theme."

FIERY FINGERS "Here she stands at the beginning of her journey, staring wide-eyed into a damp and darkened tomb," begins Steve. "Behind her, outside the tomb, there is light which represents hope and all things that are good and true in the world."







Stephen Boulter

LOCATION: England
WEB: www.epilogue.net/cgi/database
/art/list.pl?gallery=14212&genre=1 SOFTWARE: Photoshop



"I've worked as an artist for 15 years," relates Stephen. Brought up on Star Wars, he fed his imagination with Arthur C Clarke and

2000AD, but says that initially "the results were doodlings and art from a young age but I never really took it seriously." He adds: "My sci-fi and fantasy switch was flicked back on six years ago and I started to develop a style that I was pleased with." Formerly a traditional-media-only type of guy, Stephen tried mixing the two but eventually digital won the day. "I occasionally sneak acrylics in my pics though. Old habits die hard."

RED Stephen really enjoyed producing this. "It has everything I like; a big robot, big armour, big guns, alien world." It was an acrylic under painting, scanned in at 600 DPI then digitally rendered.

GREYLIGHT This is a character I'm still fine tuning," says Stephen.
This render is the one I'm most pleased with at the moment." It's inspired by the film, Nikita. "Her actions speak louder than words. This bounty hunter is in high demand."

BLUE 9 Stephen is working on a personal project: "I basically wanted a cool-looking alien whose name is so unpronounceable that others refer to it by the issue number of its armour."













Pierre Droal
LOCATION: France
WEB: www.hyperboree.com
EMAIL: contact @ hyperboree.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter



"Through my painting and my writing, I am trying to open a door leading to archaic worlds, where the stakes of today's society ssed in a tough, but clearer rre says. He is fascinated by uphy, because it "immortalises

are expressed in a tough, but clearer way," Pierre says. He is fascinated by photography, because it "immortalises every state of mankind." He adds: "Maybe it explains why my pictures tend to be realistic: I try to photograph what's in my mind, to make it tangible."

MIN THE PATRIARCH "Min is the grandfather of Riis and is therefore one or two steps closer to being a giant lizard," explains Pierre.

THE NAKE ELF Elves are often described as immortals, so Pierre wanted to express the oddness of having an old soul in a young body. "His eyes, his mouth and hands are the only witnesses of his real age," he adds.

RIIS, LOST IN HIS THOUGHTS "This character almost looks human, but he has a different ancestry. "Human's ancestors were apes, but Riis' ancestors were Saurians," Pierre says.



SEND US YOUR

Want to see your digital art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details, Images should be sent as 300 DPI TIFF or JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

SEND YOUR ARTWORK TO: FXPosé ImagineFX 30 Monmouth St Bath BA12BW

ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS TATION SAT THE CORE OF THE FANTASY ART COMMUNITY



ImagineNation News

IS IT ART?

I am often asked if digital art can rightly be called art.

By Todd Lockwood

Insofar as it is created by the artist as a means of fulfilling his personal vision, of course it is art. Relying on pre-created routines or filters, however, may fail to fulfil your artistic vision.

Good art conveys many things; it gives you a glimpse into the inner workings of the artist's mind. What makes art outstanding is the message it convevs. The mere existence of paint on canvas or pixel on monitor does not create art. It is the communication which makes it so.

The danger in digital art is the proliferation of short-cuts. These are a big part of the problem some have with calling digital art 'Art'. The hand of the artist has been replaced by an identikit computer filter. Some will rise above that challenge, that's true, but most don't.

It has been said that an artist spends the first 10 years of their career mastering their media, and the rest of their lives creating art. True or not, it's important to acknowledge that understanding the basics of art is all part of gaining the mastery. Over-reliance on prepared computer models can shortchange that fundamental part of your education.

Every outstanding computer artist I know, knows their stuff inside out. It is their personal knowledge of their image that makes them artists. It is the communication of their knowledge that makes it art.





Passion for pictures

New software New natural media package has a bargain price...

Ambient Design has announced the release of ArtRage 2, the second version of its easy-to-use painting tool. The application can simulate oil paints, pencils, felt pens and other natural media, such as a palette knife, for producing special digital effects.

As well as standard features such as lavers. ArtRage features a few unique tools. One is the reference image, which enables you to 'pin' a scanned photo or similar to your canvas and use it as a quide. Image tracing is also supported, as is a new 'metal paint' feature.

The program was created by two ex-employees of MetaCreations, the publisher that once developed Painter, "What makes ArtRage different is the way you don't need to know how to use it to get something that looks real," says cofounder Matt Fox-Wilson. "You just

open the program, paint, mix, sketch or whatever you want to do, and it just works.

ArtRage 2 for Windows or Mac costs \$19.95; download a demo at www.ambientdesign.com

Right: Belgian artist Hans Deconinck created this image with a beta version of ArtRage 2

Below: ArtRage enables you to 'pin' on a photo to use as a quide



Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

"I went to two architecture lectures in two years and by the end of the second I was drawing cartoon strips for Penthouse." Chris Foss, legendary sci-fi fantasy artist, page 54.

Expand your work area

New hardware Wacom introduces bigger tablets

Wacom has announced two new Intuos3 tablets aimed at digital artists, painters and designers.

The first is the largest tablet in the Intuos series, and the company's second wide format offering (see last issue for our review of the Intuos A5 Wide) being the Intuos A3 Wide.

The tablet offers an active area of 12x9-inches, and has a

wide aspect ratio of 16:10. This matches the ratio of widescreen monitors and gives additional drawing room for more precise

work. Wacom explains that the tablet is more convenient when working with a multi-monitor set-up.

The second tablet released by the company is the Intuos3 A4 Oversize. Primarily aimed at those producing technical drawings, the tablet is for anyone wanting to work both horizontally and vertically in A4 size.

Both tablets come with a Grip Pen and cost £379.99 and £509.99 respectively. Find out more at www.wacom. co.uk

ARTIST INSIGHT

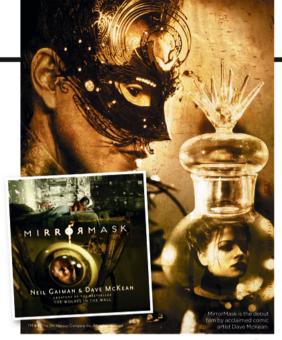
"Without a graphics tablet, I'd cry a lot initially, then I'd probably do a lot more flat colours in my comic work, and I'd also paint with real paint then scan it all in."

 Frazer Irving Comic artist, Marvel, 2000AD

check out Frazer's work for Marvel and DC Comics by visiting www.frazerining.com



ImagineFX March 2006



MirrorMask

Digital film A belated UK release for fantasy film – plus more comic-to-film adaptations...

MirrorMask, the first film directed by acclaimed comic artist Dave McKean, finally gets a UK cinema release in March. Written by McKean's long-time collaborator, Neil Gaiman, it's a modern fairytale in the grand tradition of The Dark Crystal and Labyrinth. It tells the story of a girl who longs to run away from the circus to join real life. On the way she enters the Dark Lands, which is full of glants, sphinxes and monkey birds.



The film combines live action with digital effects created by the Jim Henson Company. Gaiman and McKean

have also produced a graphic novella of the film, with new illustrations and an illustrated history of the production with storyboards and concept art.



Plans are progressing to produce a manga prequel too, written by Gaiman which will be published by Tokyopop.

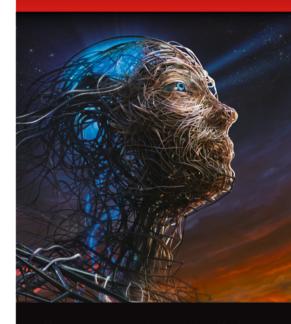
MirrorMask has a limited release in the UK on 3 March, A DVD version is available in the US.

Meanwhile, the craze to convert graphic novels into live action films continues. Priest, the novel by Min-Woo Hyung, is currently under development by Andrew Douglas, who directed the remake of The Amittyville Horror. And Se7en director David Fincher is preparing a film of Torso, the serial killer novel by Brian Michael Bendis and Marc Andreyko.

www.mirrormask.com

66 Plans are progressing to produce a manga prequel, written by Gaiman 99

changing the face of 3D



Maya® 7, the latest release of the award-winning 3D software, is packed with innovative new features allowing you to realise your creative vision faster and more easily than ever before.

Capitalising on Alias MotionBuilder® technology, Maya 7 makes character animation easier and more accurate. Other improvements such as advanced render layering and new modelling, texturing and effects tools help you achieve more with Maya.

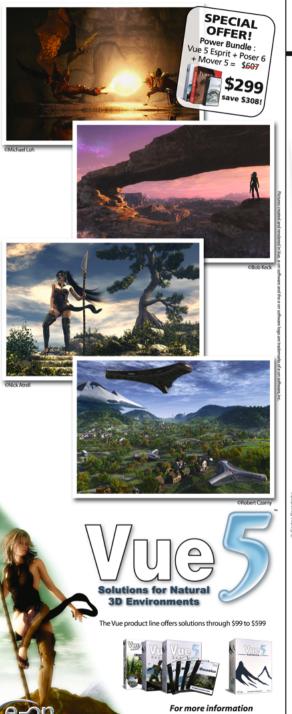
To find out how the new and innovative features of Maya are changing the face of 3D, visit www.alias.com/maya7.



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All work and no play makes...

Art advice It's important to keep a balance in your work, says artist Kieran Yanner...

If you're a struggling artist trying to make it professionally, it can be galling to see how much work commercial artists produce while maintaining quality.

A good example is Kieran Yanner. Originally from Australia but now living in the US, Kieran has an impressive roster of clients,



including DC Comics, Steve Jackson Games, White Wolf and Jive Records. He's also a regular artist for

Paizo Publishing's Dragon Magazine and Dungeon Magazine. And he's just been commissioned by WizKids Games for packaging and toy illustrations.

But while such a schedule may be enviable, Kieran believes it's important that you don't burn out. "On a personal note, I'm exploring more existential subject matter," he says (shown here). "Working as a commercial artist can somewhat 'suck you dry' - working on these pieces counterbalances that effect for me and keeps my ability to express myself visually 'in tune."

He says varying your style is a must, depending on the subject matter. "While DC has me producing more classic realist work, the pieces I produce for Paizo have a more stylised and exaggerated feel." And don't be afraid to use photographic references: "Using photo reference or photo manipulation is an objectional method for some, but for me it's another tool to complete what I see."

See more of Kieran's work at www.kieranyanner.com.

66 Working as a commercial artist can 'suck you dry' – working on personal pieces counterbalances that effect 99

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Rob Carney on rob@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street. Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

Some words of praise

Bought your magazine a couple of days ago and think it's fab. Great to see something dedicated to digital art rather than trawling through every other art mag and the internet for snippets of advice. Hope to send something soon for FXPosé. Many thanks to all involved.

Steve Bell, via email

I just want to say thanks for bringing us this absolutely awesome magazine. I buy a lot of digital magazines, but I can say this is the BEST magazine I have ever come across and will read every single page. Keep up the good work and perhaps one day I might submit some of my work... when I am up to the standard of the digital art you show. You have a new subscriber! Keep up the good work Many thanks

Martin Dexter, via email

Editor Rob Carney replies: Wow! What a response we've had. Thanks to everyone who has written in, I appreciate all the feedback and criticism, so keep your letters coming! And don't forget to submit your artwork to FXPosé - full details are on page 21.

Don't go changin'

Don't change a thing, it's rare to see a new mag that has got it almost perfect. It's aimed at all levels and has a great mix of news, reviews, etc. Try not to go down the application route, but keep to the skill and technique threads that you have done such a wonderful job at. I know you have to use applications, but I don't think we all need to have lessons in them.

Small video tutorials on technique would be a great addition to the DVD: you know the stuff, five to 10 minutes



DID YOU MISS ISSUE ONE? See page 93 for details on how vou can get vour hands on it.



- Subscribe and

on painting skin or how to make great dragon textures.

Graham Hockaday, via email

Rob replies: Thanks for the kind words, Graham. Video tutorials is an excellent idea - and one we already had planned. Over the coming months, we'll be bringing you some video tutorials from the world's leading fantasy and sci-fi artists. So stay tuned! And if you want your video tutorials to be included on the DVD, email the DVD editor, Tom on tom@imaginefx.com.

Where's the website?

When will you be starting a web page where readers can upload pics to? Richard H Eagle, via email

Rob replies: Good question, Richard. We're currently working on a huge website featuring artist galleries, forums, tutorials and interviews - check for announcements in the mag and at www.imaginefx.com soon.

Tutorial tips?

Thanks for bringing a magazine dedicated to the often forgotten art of fantasy. One thing though; I found Tim Warnock's tutorial to be incredibly hard using advanced techniques in Photoshop, Is there something I missed? Iames Green, via email

Rob replies: Thanks for your comments, James, Tim's matte painting tutorial was certainly the most advanced in issue one. However, if you open up the ImagineFX issue one DVD you'll find all of Tim's work-in-progress images and photos along with the final Photoshop file. This will certainly help you get to grips with the techniques he used to create this incredible photorealistic image.

Frazetta rules OK

Thanks for the piece on Frank Frazetta in issue one. He really is the godfather of fantasy art!

David Johnston, via email

Rob replies: We couldn't agree with you more, David. Frank Frazetta is a man who has inspired many artists. The equally inspiring Chris Foss is featured on page 54. Who else do you think should be showcased in our legends profile? Email me on rob@imaginefx. com with your suggestions...



See www.corel.com for more info

Ignored by the establishment?

This is just a quick shout to say thanks for producing what I'm sure is what every fantasy artist has been dreaming about - a fantasy art magazine! And not just any old fantasy art magazine either. You really showcase the latest talent out there. It's good to see work by some of the professionals already in the field. I found the techniques and knowledge invaluable. The DVD with its tutorials and galleries was the icing on the cake

Being a huge fan and artist of fantasy work, one thing that still annovs me is that it's not taken seriously in the modern art world! Even though the first issue of ImagineFX featured more skill and talent than most art galleries in Britain today

Therefore access to fantasy is always limited, but this is changing gradually. With the internet, comic book stores and films such as Lord of the Rings. fantasy art has made its presence felt on a global scale

And as the interest grows, so does the amount of artists who produce fantasy artwork, but one of the hardest things is to get exposed and recognised. So I hope through ImagineFX artists can finally get the exposure they so desperately need and deserve, as well as bringing to light renowned artists' work, who have made fantasy art what it is today. Umesh Patel, via email.

Rob replies: Thanks, Umesh. What does everybody think about fantasy you like to see more on these issues in rob@imaginefx.com.

Events

FANTASY & SCI-FI ART SHOWS AROUND THE WORLD

MADICON. US

DATE: 10-12 Mark

URL: www.madicon.org

A non-stop anime room and art show A non-stop anime room and art snow complement await you. Guests at this sci-fi and fantasy extravaganza include Ursula Vernon. Panel discussions are promised too. The show will be held at James Madison University in Virginia, Call +1 540 568 6211

EICFA. US

DATE: 15-19 March URL: www.iafa.org

That's the International Conference for the Fantastic in the Arts, and this year's conference is looking specifically at comics, graphic novels and art in general. This year will be a more scholarly affair, including a call for papers. Wyndham Fort Lauderdale Airport Hotel, in Florida. Call +1 954 920 3300.

FANTASCICON. US

DATE: 17-19 March

URL: www.fantascicon.com

This year's theme is The Dragon Lords of Tombstone, a heady mix of sci-fi, westerns and dragons, no less. Get down to the Comfort Inn in ol' Chattanooga, Tennessee. Call +1 423 893 7979. Note: side-arms will be piece-bonded by the town marshall, so watch it.

AGGIECON, US

DATE: 23-26 March URL: aggiecon.tamu.edu

The oldest and largest student-run SF convention in the US. It features an art show, a Convenion in the Os. It reduces an air sinw, a masquerade contest and a live Rocky Horror Picture Show floor show. Art guest of honour is Brian Stelfreeze from Gaijin Studios, with the whole caboodle happening at Texas &&M University's Memorial Student Center.

I-CON, US

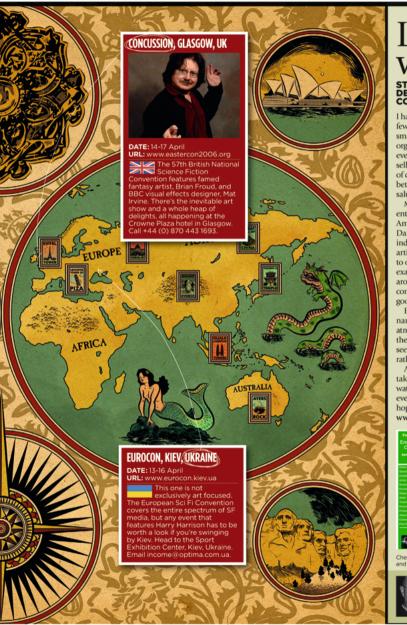
DATE: 24-26 March URL: www.iconsf.org

The art show at I-CON is one of the largest SF/ fantasy themed shows in the country, and rentary tremed show in the country, and features many well-known sci-fi and fantasy artists. At the event, they will be presenting the second annual I-CON Artists Awards. It's just one part of a thriving expo that takes place at Stony Brook University, New York

IF YOU KNOW OF ANY FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND YOU THINK THEY SHOULD BE FEATURED HERE, PLEASE SEND US THE DETAILS. EMAIL THEM TO THE EDITOR AT: ROB@IMAGINEFX.COM



The fantasy art world calendar...



Last year I went to...

STEVE BENTLEY OF BRAINFREEZE **DESIGNS REVIEWS EMERALD CITY COMICON 2005...**

I have been to Seattle's comic con for the past few years and watched it expand from a smaller celebration of fandom to a large, wellorganised event. Typically for such large events, a huge selection of vendors were selling the weird and wonderful. All manner of comics, key chains and everything in between was packed into the event hall - a salute to fandom everywhere.

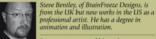
Most of the major names in the entertainment industry were represented. Among the more famous were Marvel and Dark Horse, along with a bundle of small independent publishers. Companies brought artists and producers, who were all delighted to offer advice to those wanting their art examined. There were larger gatherings around the more famous names, but smaller companies were easily accessible and offered good solid advice to aspiring artists.

Even more than the art and the famous names, I remember the relaxed and fun atmosphere that is sometimes absent from the bigger conventions. The presenters seemed able to spend more time with fans, rather than just churning out autographs.

As always I enjoyed wandering around taking in the art demonstrations, people watching and browsing the stores. This year's event promises to be bigger and better. I only hope its relaxed mood can be maintained. www.brainfreezedesigns.com



and to book: www.emeraldcitycomicon.com.



rtist

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY OUR PANEL OF DIGITAL ART GURUS.



Don Seegmiller



Don wears many hats including traditional artist digital artist, teacher and

www.seegmillerart.com

Henning Ludvigsen



Henning has 12 years illustration, design and

www.henningludvigsen.com

George Hull



conceptual illustrator to visual effects director on varied films, from Finding

Frazer Irving



illustrator Frazer has worked for DC Comics, Pepsi, 2000AD, Marvel

www.frazerirving.com

Adam Benton



high-profile clients in advertising, publishing, science and medicine His love is sci-fi art.

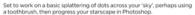
Joanna Zhou



A student at Chelsea ege of Art & Design

www.chocolatepixels.com







This shows further effects, such as gradient fills over the stars, for added

celestial flavour.

Ouestion

How can I create comic 'starscapes' that don't just look like a load of white dots? Adam Taylor, UK

Answer Frazer replies



Starscapes can be done in a variety of ways. My technique is pretty straightforward and uses

traditional, standard methods, as well as a little Photoshop magic, to create something quite simple yet effective. To start with, I gather my tools: some A4 paper, a toothbrush, some water and some ink.

By applying traces of ink to the toothbrush and dipping it in some water, I can flick and spray onto the paper in irregular patterns, to

simulate clusters of stars. This may take a few tries because the ink sometimes drips, and clusters may merge together. Looking at pictures of starscapes will give you an idea how they are formed.

Once the art is dry, I scan it into Photoshop and set it up as an RGB file. I hit Command>I to invert the whole image so that the black dots are now white on a black background, and I save this.

Using this piece as my template, every time I need a starscape or night sky I import the image, copy and

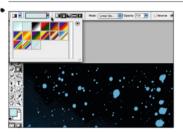
paste it into the image I'm working on and then I can edit it, to add suitable colours and effects.

To introduce colour, I simply use a Brush tool (ideally a soft brush with Opacity Jitter set to Pen pressure if you're using a stylus to paint with) and I gently paint a white mist over the image to simulate clouds and nebulae. Then I set the brush mode to Colour, select whatever colours I want to be in the image and paint them gently over the top. You can add extra glow effects by following the steps opposite.



Your questions answered...

Step-by-step: Adding glowing stars...



Det the Gradient Fill tool to Linear Dodge, and opacity to about 70 per cent. Select the foreground-to-transparent option as we only want one small area of colour. This effect can be used with Radial Gradient or the Diamond Gradient.



Choose a star and apply the gradient over the top of it. Use pastel shades to create a bright glow and darker shades for duller glows. Playing around with colours is part of the fun of this.



To add to the effect, try applying a second gradient fill of a lighter shade over the top, or even slightly to the side, to emulate clusters.

Question

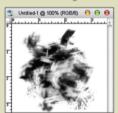
I hear and read so much about custom brushes in Photoshop. How do I create a custom brush and why would I want to? Sarah Law, UK

Answer Don replies



Today's digital painting programs come with an array of brushes, but most look ordinary. As

you gain confidence you'll want to create custom brushes. In most programs this is not difficult. The approaches vary slightly. Here are two of many controls in Photoshop CS2 for customising your new brushes. I encourage you to explore all the different settings.



As well as spacing control, I use the Angle Jitter slider, in the Shape Dynamics menu. This controls the rotation between each brush dab - good to add stroke randomness. You get a realtime update on how the slider affects your brush.



on a white background. I create a small document on a white background. I create most brushes at less than 256x256 pixels. I scribble a shape using standard brushes.



down through the choices and select Define Brush Preset. Up pops a dialogue brush with a preview image where I can name my brush and click OK.



2 I remove denser areas with an eraser. To add more randomness, I run one or two of Photoshop's filters on my brush to be.



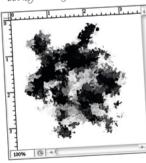
there is now a preview at the bottom of the brushes, showing my new one. Here I find basic information about my new brush, such as its size.

Artist's secret

CUSTOMISING BRUSHES FURTHER
Creating a basic brush in Phetashap is easy that
non never satisfied with the basic varian. I always
go into the patient and customize the brush
fourther. The two settings that I adjust the mast
ner through the Brush Tip shape and shape
Operatings means.

agruents received for thape means I adjust the gracing of the dath in the strake is they are not completely convincy and other or I paint. Vising the spacing filled, I adjust the space between the dath to my liking. A real time update of the brush strake is denown as you make the slider. This gives greater control over the spacing I have un each brush.

Don seegmiller, digital artist



ImagineNation Artist Q&A

I open my scanned line art in Photoshop and go to Image>Adjust Auto Levels>Levels until the black lines are crisp but not jagged. I copy and paste the outlines onto a new layer and set this as Multiply. This is the basic set-up for colouring or toning.



QuestionI like to ink my illustrations and manga pages by hand. What issues should I watch out for when I'm preparing them for digital rendering? Tim Booth, US

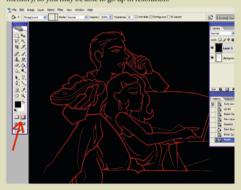
Answer

Joanna replies



Although most digital artists can't live without their graphics tablets, it's still tricky to sketch and ink directly onto the screen. For this reason, I always prepare my black outlines on paper and then scan them in. When setting the

scanning resolution, aim for anywhere between 300 DPI and 600 DPI (the higher the better). Bitmap or greyscale images take up less memory, so you may be able to go up in resolution.



To colour in the outlines as well, I separate the black from the white base, I copy the outline layer first. Then I create a new layer and fill it in completely with black. I set the black layer as Guick Mask Mode (right button, below Foreground/Background Colour on the toolbar). I paste the outline layer onto the black, resulting in a red line art mask. I remove the quick mask by choosing Standard Mode (left button, next to Guick Mask Mode) and a selection of the line art appears. I just hit Delete and the black outlines are isolated. I set the layer option to Lock Transparent Pixels, then I can airbrush or paint over the black.

Ouestion

I love painting on the computer using Photoshop but I'm having trouble finding a tool that blends colours well. What do you advise?

Paolo Carletti, Italy

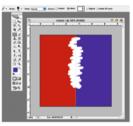
Answer Don replies



Photoshop artists approach this task in different ways. A common method is to use a brush with low opacity

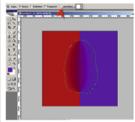
settings and gradually paint one colour into another. This maintains your existing brush strokes and gradually gives the illusion of blending. You can use the Healing brush to blend colours.

In Photoshop CS2, I create two different images. You can choose any



I select the Healing brush, check the Pattern option and go to Palette>Blank pattern. I paint a zigzag white stroke across the two colours. As I quit drawing the colours are smoothly blended.

colour and size. The first is about 400x400 pixels. I fill half the image with blue and the other half with red. I create another, white, image of 64x64 pixels. With the second image active, I select Edits Define Pattern. The naming menu pops up. I name the blank pattern 'Blank' and click OK. This creates a new item in the Patterns palette. I discard the small image, then restore the original image where I shall blend my colours...



For even blending on big areas, I select the Patch tool (by holding down the Healing brush icon). I draw a selection, go to Library>Patterns, select a blank pattern and click Use Pattern.

Question How do I make explosions in comic art?

Answer Frazer replies



I shy away from line art and focus purely on the digital painting. I feel this resonates the nature of the effect. First

I set up a ground colour, to suggest temperature. Then I set up a new layer above it, for painting the flash of the explosion. I pick a bristle brush with Opacity Jitter set to Pen pressure and Mode set to Linear Dodge. Using a hotter colour than the background, I paint strokes into the centre, from hard to soft, with peaks accentuating flares. On the lower layer I use a Burn tool and a similar bristled brush. I choose a

Photoshop CS default brush. I paint darker strokes *away* from the centre, then merge the layers and create varied textures with Burn and Paint brushes.



Adding spots of colour with the Brush tool can make the explosion shoot out debris and look more dramatic.



ImagineFX March 2006

Your questions answered...

Ouestion

I keep seeing cool images done with Global Illumination in other software. I know Bryce doesn't have this, but is there any way I can achieve this effect by forgery?

Answer Adam replies



GI calculates direct and indirect light in a scene, to produce more photo-realistic renders.

You can achieve something similar, such as soft, diffuse shadows and an even light throughout, with an array of normal lights. They need to be arranged in a hemispherical shape, emulating the global light from the sky. Several methods for creating a light dome can be found on the internet. You may be able to download some from Bryce-related sites, but to save you time I've created a couple of domes and examples here: www.kromekat.com/freebies/

bryce/lightdomes.zip.

Because so many lights are used (more than 130 in this example). their individual intensity needs to be lowered down to around 2 to 5. depending whether you use other lights in the scene. You can click on [E] next to the light group and edit them all in one go.

Here, I have used just the light dome with white lights, then the same again but with a pale sky blue tinted dome and a yellow tinted sun. By adding some reflective materials, you can achieve the impression of an HDRI (high dynamic range illumination) effect.

For a better look, try duplicating the light dome and rotate it slightly to get a more accurate and smoother shadow pattern. However, with a textured surface you may not notice any artefacts anyway.





The render time will obviously go up, but you can see from the examples that the results are worth

Artist's secret

since version s. Bryce has had soft shadows - however they actually work like 'Area' shadows, which are the most true to life, because they produce hand edges close to the object and fade off to soft. They take longer to render, but are worth it!

Adam Benton, Digital artist

Step-by-step: How to create an explosion in Photoshop CS...



Using the Brush tool as described, paint strokes into the middle. Aim to get the edges/ends quite furry. Build up peaks and avoid making them too regular.



On the lower layer, use the Burn tool to darken the outside. Ensure the strokes go in the same direction as those on the lighter layer. Again, avoid regular peaks and play off the peaks set up on the light layer.



Merge the layers and alternate to create a sense of three dimensions within the image. Maybe even add some flecks of light to simulate sparks or debris.

ImagineNation Artist Q&A

Question
When I paint in
Photoshop, my images
always seem too
saturated and the shapes
look like plastic. Can
you give me any tips on
how to make my digital
art look less like it's computer generated, and more like a traditional painting? Lou Jónsson, Denmark

Answer Henning replies



Creating digital art is quite different to traditional painting. However there are ways you can emulate the look of the latter and even use a workflow reminiscent of traditional methods.

The computer screen uses RGB colour, which is completely different to real paint. It gives you easy access to a wider range of colours that will only work on a screen. These can make your paintings appear over saturated.

The most common 'mistake' is to use brushes that are too smooth. They make a painting look too airbrushed and details become blurry. I would replace those plain, smooth airbrush-like soft ones with other brushes, to make the art look more dynamic. Even a simple round hard edged brush improves the feeling of a painting and can make it look more real. And it's more fun.

Compare colours to real life. Look at references then try to capture all the colours in the surfaces





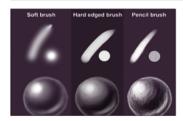
and mix them together. Being moderate when it comes to extreme highlights will also help. It's common to take the shadows and highlights too far when painting digitally. After all, it is the sharp highlights that make something look glossy or shiny.

Another trick is to add grain to the painting at the end. Personally, I'm not too fond of the perfectly smooth style that often results from working digitally. On real paintings and digital photographs you will not see perfect transitions, nor any evenly-coloured surfaces. 'Messing up' the painting at the end is one way to achieve a more believable result.



Hard edged brushes with narrow spacing and pencil brushes are both excellent substitutes for smooth brushes

Step-by-step: Try different brushes, use light and shade carefully and add grain.



In the Brush presets menu, set the Spacing slider to 3-7 per cent to make it smooth. Remember to keep the flow low to maintain control of your shading. More advanced brushes are perfect for emulating pencils or other drawing/painting tools.



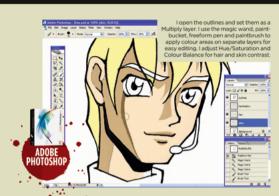
Check reference materials - highlights contain colour from ambient light, so they should not be totally black. The Dodge and Burn tool in Photoshop tend to make things look plastic and kill dark and light values.



Add some grain. I fill a new layer with RBG values: R:128, G:128, B:128 and add a Noise filter (400 per cent). I set the layer to Overlay blending mode, run the Brush strokes-Spatter filter twice, do a normal blur and set the Opacity to 5-10 per cent.



Your questions answered...

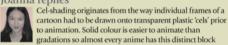


Question

In manga art, cel-shading is mentioned a lot. What exactly is it and how can I achieve this style using Photoshop? Linh Ruan, Vietnam

Answer

Joanna replies



shading style. The visual appeal of cel-shading also became popular in manga illustration, so it can even be considered a trademark of Japanese comic culture. It's easy to imitate this style using graphics software. Although less time consuming than a realistically shaded picture, it will test your confidence in mark-making and deciding where to lay down solid areas of light and shadow.



When applying cel-style artwork, try not to get too carried away with shading. Your final image should still have a two-dimensional, anime quality, which means it's usually sufficient to have three shades for every area (light-mid-dark, or mid-darkshadow). Having too many shades not only makes more work, it can also result in a peculiar looking picture.

Question

What brushes are best for painting in Photoshop? Any tricks or shortcuts?

Answer Steven replies



No single big shortcut can suddenly lift your graphical work to a new level. Such progress is achieved

gradually, with lots of practice. There are speciality brushes for special effects, but these are no substitute for experience and skill. Here are a couple of basic brushes that could last you a lifetime. Don't add too many fancy ones until you feel ready.

Hard-edged round pressure-sensitive transparency is a commonly used paint brush. One variation is to remove the pressure-sensitivity – great for blocking in solid areas quickly. If you use this as your main brush, your style may look



This image demonstrates the different strokes that are available for you to work with.

rougher, stronger and more painterly. Hard-edged round pressure-sensitive size, is excellent for painting more complex strokes in a single movement. It can give a vibrant feel. It's useful for creating lightning, cracks, veins, fire, hair and cloth blowing in the wind.



ImagineNation Artist Q&A

Ouestion

I want to do fantasy scenes in Poser. The figures and clothing provided are not suitable. Where can I get decent fantasy extras for my Poser library? Sam Jackson, UK

Answer Adam replies



You are in luck because the third party support for Poser is now enormous and there are quite a few

websites selling high-quality additions for your library.

The choice is not just limited to clothing, either. You can buy a large variety of props, weapons, armour, textures, sets and environments. There are alternate original figures ranging from realistic humans to anime characters, goblins, trolls and dragons. The list seems endless.

What's more, the huge growth of the Poser community has led to healthy competition among retailers. With such choice, artists can be more selective and original than ever with their imagery.

One of the premiere Poser third party websites at the moment is www.daz3d.com. It supplies many



Surf to this selection of third party sites to find suitable freebies. There are plenty more if these ones don't provide the perfect kit.

alternative original human figures. Many other sites provide content, props and textures for them, such as www.renderosity.com.

www.runtimedna.com and www.poserpros.com.

Most of these sites have freebies sections that are useful for your creative endeavours. Consider doing a search on Google for Poser, but be warned, your credit card might not thank you!







Question
When I combine background and foreground objects they look too much like a cut and paste job. How can I make them look more like they fit together in the same scene?

Julian Campbell, Scotland

Answer

Henning replies



Consistency in the use of colours and ambient light, along with consistency in the angles of light sources and

shadows, are what make different elements work together in the same picture. First, figure out what kind of ambient light you have. If the background has been decided, adjust the colours in the pasted-in object to fit the background. I prefer using Colour balance (Ctrl+B in Photoshop for Windows) to adjust the colours.

Make sure the angles of the light sources and shadows are the same in





the background and foreground. Take care of this before you combine the two elements because inconsistent light source angles on different elements can really break a piece.

In the pictures here, the background is a cold, blue ambient colour, while the pasted-in girl is a warm, golden hue. I want to keep the cold light, so I'll adjust the layer with the girl to make it appear colder.

When combining elements like this, it's important to have a good crop of the pasted element. If, for example, the hair that's been cut out is too rough or too sharp it will look weird. You can also try going over the picture and softening it by brushing out with the rubber tool, using a soft brush on low flow.



ImagineIX March 2006

Your ques

Coming next month Our artists answer your questions on:

Achieving mood with colour Take custom brushes further Painterly results in Poser

Ouestion

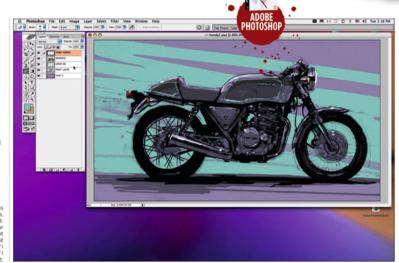
What steps can I take to improve at doing fast colour conceptual sketches? Mark Bailey, UK

Answer George replies

It's useful to present fast concept sketches to movie directors. Each artist works in their own way and steps

vary with different subject matter, too. This approach uses the motorcycle sketch started in last month's ImagineFX. It would have been tough to draw the bike in Photoshop, so I drew it on paper and scanned it in. Then I painted colour underneath the drawing layer, to act as a transparency with its Layer Property set to Multiply. I started with a fast sketch and added basic detail. I spent time on the line drawing and inking the details, so the colour steps can now happen fast.

Most of my digital art starts with the process described in last month's Q&A. From there, the steps vary depending on what look! I want. For this piece, I want to create a fast, bold colour sketch, loosely rendered - in an hour or so. I want high contrast, with details indicated but not laboured. My process would be different if wanted more tonal and colour subtleties and if I wanted to spend more time on it.



Step-by-step: Feed lots of fast ideas to movie directors with your sketches...



magine the end result. I think a darker, dusky setting will look more dramatic, with low ambient light and high contrast source lights. I use Colour Balance to give a darker, neutral background colour. I paint dark tones on the bike's body silhouette.



work on lighting and mood, from dark to light, painting light into the sketch. I use Levels to darken highlights. I keep midtones from going black. For headlight, tail light and reflections I use a paintbrush set to Colour Dodge. A texture brush adds exhaust.



3 carefully pull out details with midtones. The light depicts the gas tank, tyres and chrome. Painting light to dark means wrestling with contrast levels. Finally lincrease brightness using the Levels adjustment and move the highlight slider.

Got a digital art problem? Brushes out of control? Our panel can help. Email your question to our experts at help@imaginefx.com or write to Artist Q&A, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW.

Rising Star Marta Dahlig



Marta Dahlig

Dark owl Marta Dahlig likes to develop her characters in the dead of night...

MARTISTS: Wo

Christophe Vacher

Siudmak, Zdzislaw Beksinski,

ur rising star of fantasy this issue has been inhabiting a fairly dark world, rife with sin. Marta Dahlig has risen to prominence on the back of exquisitely detailed, gothic-tinged work. More recently we've witnessed her ambitious project to put a face to the seven deadly sins. One of these was included in Ballistic Publishing's recent Painter book.

Working from a base in Warsaw, Poland, the 20-year-old says she is first and foremost an 'owl' who prefers to let the creative juices run wild in the dead of night. This approach clearly gives her more spectral images a suitably nocturnal feel. "I love to stay up late with a cup of steaming coffee. Only then, in the dark, can I concentrate fully on painting," Matta confides.

She says the Seven Deadly Sins series has been her most wide-reaching project to date. Combining imposing characters with a distinct art nouveau feel, the series has an ambitious scope. "The idea came to me spontaneously," she explains. "I researched the topic on the web to find out more about each of the sins. I've always been a fan of art nouveau, so it didn't take me long to decide that my sins would draw on this style. Each painting, aside from the time spent on planning and designing in my head, took me around 60 hours."

Aside from the art noveau influence, Marta draws on an impressive colour palette to give her work depth and additional feeling. So how important is colour to the way she goes about building her characters? "To me, colours are one of the key elements of any painting," Marta confirms. "They define it. I usually spend quite a lot of time

thinking of a colour scheme to suit the mood and the kind of feelings I want to provoke. I use dark shades and contrasts for drama, light, easy-going colours for a peaceful mood and grevish blue colours for sadness."

Besides bold use of colour, another striking feature of her work is its stunning sympathy for the human face. "I draw inspiration from the world around me," she explains. "In terms of faces, I get them from my mind in most cases. Sometimes, when I need some anatomical reference, I make my family members pose for me."

Although much of the young artist's work has a strong painterly feel, technology obviously plays an important part in how her images are created. Using both Painter and Photoshop CS as her main software tools, coupled with a Wacom Intuos3 graphics tablet, Marta says she uses a wide palette of effects and brushes.

"My favourite tools in Painter are the Basic Round Brush and Blender from Tinting, Opaque Round Brush from Oils and Fine Point from Inking Tools. In Photoshop, I love the Hard Round Tool as well as my custom Speckled Brush," she says.

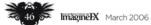
Marta is waiting to see where her debut in the well-received Ballistic book will take her next. For now, she's pleased to end her emersion in the world of sin, especially

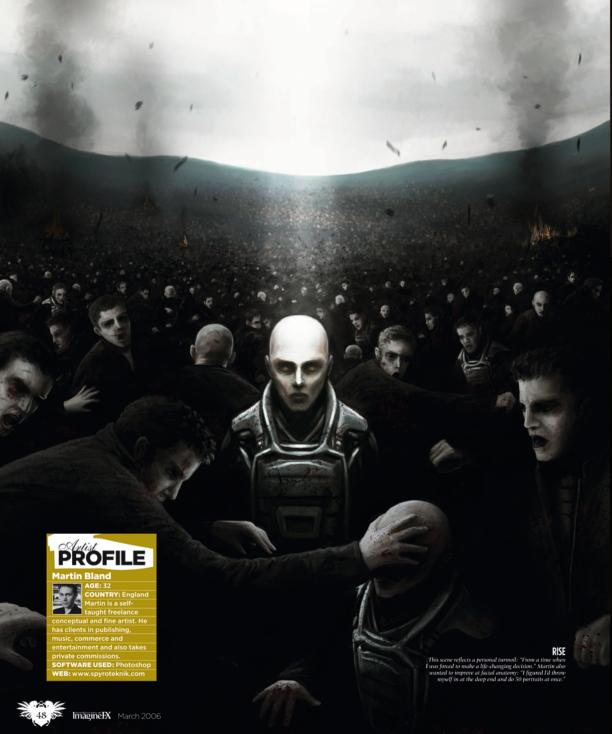
envy. "Envy is the worst," she scorns. "To me, this sin means acting against the person who possesses what we want – cunning, hurting and back-stabbing forthesheer factof someone being more lucky. Other deadly sins, except wrath, are mostly destructive to the actual sinners, whereas envy makes innocent possessiffer."











Theastor MARTIN BLAND

MASTER BLAND

Reckon you can knock up a futuristic masterpiece in about an hour? That's what self-taught conceptual 'speed-painter' Martin Bland does...

urrently hard at work on what he describes as "a religiously questionable death metal CD cover," Martin Bland conjures up a digital wonderland of a very particular nature. His work is not exactly gothic, or even dystopic, it's about a personal vision of where he thinks we're all heading. "I do have post-apocalyptic tendencies," he admits. "I'm not one for the fancy colourful visions we've been fed of future life. It'll be a lot more gritty and more subtle than what's expected." This future is largely conceived in the dark. "I think best at night."

His astonishingly rapid rise from being a novice to a freelance concept and fine artist for the music, entertainment and publishing industries has been faster than



LUCIDA

"This is how I see my other half," Martin reveals.
"Commanding and somewhat scary at times, but
ultimately as sexy as hell."

anyone would take to do a degree. Martin taught himself all he needed to know to produce the impressive images on these pages. But Wacom gets a nod of recognition too – Martin only returned to illustration three years ago when he got a graphics tablet as a well-chosen gift. "I've never looked back," he smiles.

Martin had in fact been drawing from an early age. "I did a lot of pencil work until the age of about 16, when the social life took hold," he recalls. It's a common pattern, but those early years meant his artistic basis has always been there. By the time the question of a career was on the table, Martin's illustration skills had been gathering dust for a while so he started out in the printing industry. "I went from lithographic printer through to print manager in 10 years," he says. Although it wasn't a true calling, it did entrench a few worthwhile values: "Attention to detail, composition and colour sense."

The return to the fold began recently: "I only really got back into it when I got the internet seven years ago, through the weird world of chat rooms." It started innocently enough, with the creation of animated GIFs but before long Martin was onto the hard stuff: "Via web design I got into digital art."

VISION

So what brings about the somewhat eldritch tint of these future visions? Tim not entirely sure," confesses Martin. "I tend to paint what's deep-seated in my imagination, so I usually surprise myself with what comes out." He elaborates: "It's how I'm viewing current events and my own fears of the



THE ARTIST

A cold shell of a post-industrial wasteland seemed a fitting place to find Martin Bland and ask him more about his apocalypse-inspired leanings.

Theastol MARTIN BLAND



LUSTRA

Beautiful and sci-fi don't often overlap in Martin's universe. "I tried to achieve an image that would not look out of place on the mantelpiece while still remaining true to a futuristic vision."

by future. They tend to tell a story of how I'm feeling." So there's an element of catharsis in there. "With the exception of family portraits, it's been that way from the beginning." And anyway, it's not like these images are actually offensive, not to anyous with the slightest grapp on reality. What matters is being honest. "It's more about morality," offers Martin. In other words, don't do things you think are wrong, or at least questionable. "But skulls and blood, twisted metal images of demons are nothing out of the ordinary, it's what concept artists paint every day."

This clear sightedness and the simple quality of his paintings are what make Having a child amplifies your awareness of things too." The process of translating the world into paint is as old as mankind, but Martin's process is amplified by working without using any reference images. "What I paint comes directly from my imagination," he adds.

LEARNING

Martin is self-taught, but he doesn't see this as any kind of disadvantage: "I have to work a little harder, but all the information I need is freely available online. It's a matter of applying myself and having the drive to get better every day."

And if you love it, as Martin so obviously does, it isn't a chore: "I've only been painting for three years, so I've come a long way in a short period, but I have a hell of a long way to go, to get to where I want to be."

PORTRAIT OF POLISSA The title code is a unilitary classification. The st a defence specialist, a mild mannered species, but give him a gan...

66 I 'speed-paint' at least one hour a day, sometimes packing in 10 images. I don't usually even save the results

Martin's work brilliantly effective. It's not the rose-tinted future we're often fed, it's a world where there might not be a happy ending, just like the real one. "I tend to put out imagery of realistic scenarios rather than painting a shiny spaceman or an elf. Escapism just doesn't do it for me. I like to imagine worlds people can truly connect with. I want people to see parallels."

Martin's visions relate to common experiences: "Things aren't sugar coated and brightly coloured, they have an edge. I like to explore those edges. The world's political climate as of the past few years has been kind of 'on edge.' Those fears have a natural tendency to slip into what I'm doing.

A man needs goals, ambitions. Formal training is certainly a good thing, but it doesn't preclude the success of other avenues, Martin accepts. 'Tim glad to be an example that the little guy can do okay too.' And he's doing better than okay, as the images here show. It's hard to believe they are the product of just three year's practice.

"The best advice I can give is to practice, figure things out yourself, sketch like there's no tomorrow and explore the wealth of information the internet has to offer."

THE APOCALYPSE

As with much of his work, for Apocalypse, Martin didn't really start with a



Part of Martin's Lesa universe. At this outpost, data miners drop off their workload and are sent out to accumulate more information.









"He is here to relieve you of your sins," advises Martin. "Stand before him and have your soul renewed."

>> conventional sketch - it was more of a voyage of discovery: "I start digitally, working on forms and planes rather than lines. I build up an image as I go, blocking in shapes and finding forms in there to work with," he explains.

"I usually have a base painting done in around an hour. It won't usually change much apart from being more refined at the final stage." So is that because of a very clear vision or large amounts of practice? "I 'speed-paint' at least one hour a day, sometimes packing in 10 images. This is like gestural drawing, only cooler. I don't usually even save the results." This is the stage at which the raw material is generated. "If it doesn't look great after an hour I scrap it and move on. Sometimes I come out with some nice imagery that I work on further."

Posting these images online as they develop has kept Martin's development on-



But he's understandably reticent: "It's just at the planning stage." This would have been the first information you'd get from a lot of people, but not Martin. For that reason alone you're inclined to believe his idea would make a good film.

Martin assures us he's "excited and passionate enough to follow it through some day." For now though, it's had to take a back seat to commercial work. "I seem to have been in demand recently so I haven't had the personal time to put into it." That's something he'll have to get used to.

Martin Bland's

Picture a hybrid of Ghandi and a sea monkey



Place of birth

Date of birth

Favourite film or scene from a movie

Favourite kind of music

Favourite traditional artist

Favourite digital artists

First memory

First love

Most prized possession

Average time spent on an

Figure from history you most

Single most important piece

Left or right-handed

Any views on the afterlife

What is your motto?

Any grand plans?

66 The world's political climate as of the past few years has been 'on edge.' Those fears slip into what I'm doing

track. "I post alongside a lot of big guns in the concept art industry every day and see how they all work, from sketch to final, on some major projects. That's enough to make me humble.

FUTURE PERFECT

Perhaps it is because Martin has moved from hobbyist to pro so quickly that he is philosophical about the whole career thing: "I haven't thought that far ahead to be honest, I just take it one day at a time." He work on a sci-fi blockbuster, something huge so my kid can brag at school!" Martin has been approached by an agent after pitching a story idea to a Hollywood studio.

PAINT LIKE MARTIN BLAND



Chris Foss

An artist who changed the future, drawing what didn't exist when film companies were feeling their way into sci-fi.

t's hard to overstate the influence Chris Foss has had on our collective vision of the future. If you have any classic SF books, chances are you have classic Foss. If you're not big on print, you'll know his film work. Familiar with Alien or Superman?

magineE

Until he arrived on the scene, the future was a needle sharp, sleek-looking place that got less and less human. Chris introduced us to a human future, where space ships were "rumbling bumbling bangy things with bits of metal hanging off." People responded with wide-eyed recognition.

FALSE START

"All I ever wanted to do was be an artist," Chris recalls. Like parents the world over, the Fosses were sceptical about the value of an art school education. "They fought me tooth and nail," recalls Chris. "Their argument was that once you have a degree, you can go and do your art stuff." He addis: "My parents were struggling school teachers. Then mum bought a Picasso by accident in a drapers shop. She was terrific at rooting and ferreting."

The pressure was too much for young Chris, and just as the 60s



started swinging he ended up in Cambridge studying architecture. This was a mistake though: "I went to two lectures in two years and by the end of the second was drawing cartoon strips for Penthouse."

ROOM WITH A VIEW

You see, Chris has more than one feather to his cap. "My first break was with erotic artwork," he says. "Because that's what they wanted at Bob Guccione's new magazine, Penthouse." And strangely, once you know of this 'other side' you can see that it somehow suffuses the SF images too.

It also explains something of the magic behind the peculiar Foss vision of the future: "For me a giant spaceship would have topless female stokers shovelling in nuclear nuts," laughs Chris. "Whereas for other people it was the Z-drive."

An intimate familiarity with the human form, not just as an object but as a sexual form produces an organic way of seeing the world. Chris makes no attempt to imagine himself as a robot or an Al. "I'm perfectly aware that technology advances in leaps and bounds," he points out. "I'm just amiably waiting on the side lines for the most usable bits of technology."

OLD IUMBO IETS

Chris has produced covers for just about every classic SF author – Philip K Dick, Heinlein, and he was the Asimov man for a long time. In the 1970s, Chris was the source of SF imagery: "JG Ballard too. I did a lot of his covers."

An editor at Penthouse guided Chris to recruit an agent, as he was being limited by the work he was getting on the magazine. "The first big job I got was for the Sunday Times, illustrating an article by Stan Kuhrick on ESP." The thing was, Chris didn't need a photo reference. "The guy I went to see at Pan books was overjoyed. He said: 'Thank God, I can finally have spaceships!'" This ushered in a golden era: "The publishers were all located in and around Soho so we used to drink in this lovely little pub on Poland Street with the various art directors."

FROM DUNE TO ALIEN

Drawing for Penthouse while still at university, cover artist to the SF aristocracy, what next? "They were casting about for an artist to illustrate this book by Alex Comfort." So Chris drew the illustrations for The Joy of Sex. Exciting as that was, it was not the zenith. "That began when I started Dune with Aleiandro Jodorowsky." This maverick genius had bought the rights to Frank Herbert's masterpiece convinced a French industrialist to make it

"Somewhere out there is this huge book with the entire storyboard in it," muses the artist. When Dune was canned by shortsighted Hollywood execs, Chris didn't miss a beat; he'd already been commissioned to do the artwork for another classic: Superman.

While Chris was still on a high with the caped crusader, Jodorowsky pulled a rabbit out of his hat: "The work we did for Dune ended up as the basis for Alien." Mr Foss, take a bow, your place in history is assured.

A prolific artist, Chris continues to expand his universe in many directions while attempting to marry the two threads of his work – erotic and futuristic. "People like me are the filters," he ponders. "We take in everything around us and out the other end come these images."



ROBOTS OF DAWN

Highlighting Chris' deft ability with character, this little chap looks as if he could turn nasty if he doesn't get his own way.

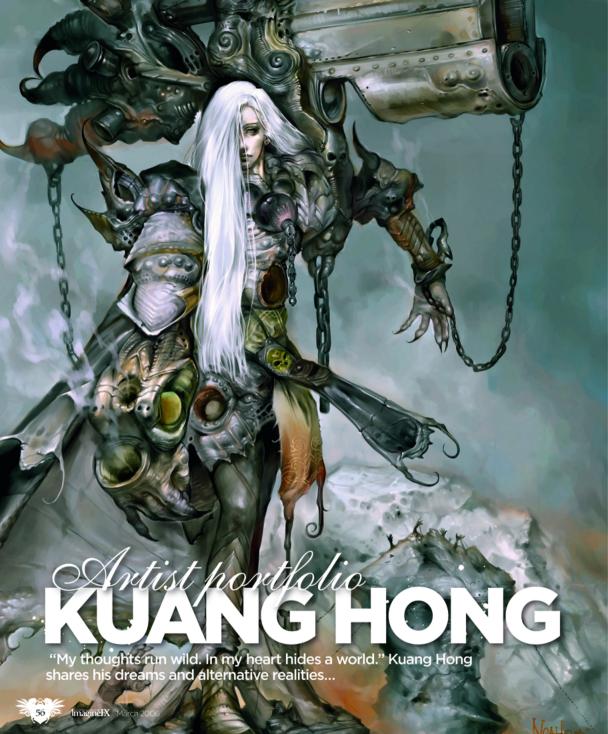
RAILRUNNER

From the clusive Chris Foss Portfolio, perhaps an example of the technology Chris is "waiting amiably for the world to develop."









elodrama lives and breathes in the pixels of Kuang Hong's rich and imaginative illustrations. The artist has an old head on his young shoulders. His work has both the air of an accomplished artist and the energy of youthful idealism. These qualities enable him to open a window on a weird and wonderful futurescape. "Drawing these kinds of images gives me a sense of freedom," enthuses Kuang. "It translates into a way to present totally what I think, without restrictions."

He combines this outlook with a natural aptitude for creating characters. And his degree of empathy with them produces compelling results. "When I look at my characters' eyes I feel illusions sometimes, as if they're really trying to say something to me," adds Kuang, Without that connection it would be easy to produce work with technical flair that still felt cold.

"When drawing characters I try to find their thoughts," he explains. This gives him a way to look out through his character's eyes. Kuang then paints the world he envisages around them. "I put down their feelings and environments next, adding the markings of time to their bodies and faces." This is crucial if the characters are to gel with their scenes. "This is more obvious in some pieces than others," adds Kuang. "I want their thoughts to be independent, cold, but still as one with their environment."

He likes the viewer to feel able to take ownership of the characters; too personal and they become a turn-off: "The connections between the people in the paintings are treated more vaguely, to give viewers space for their imagination," the artist points out.

Surprisingly, the painterly beauty of Kuang's work is not the product of long years of traditional training. "My schooling was just like any regular kid in China," he reveals. "Nothing I've studied ever had anything to do with drawing."

He admits to scrawling on the walls of his family home while still in short trousers, but recalls: "It wasn't until I got into university that I started teaching myself to draw." A personal style emerged quickly: "It probably formed a couple of years after I graduated."

2B OR NOT 2B

He first joined a game development studio back in 2001, as a young artist fresh from university. There, he was introduced to Painter. "I was extremely attracted to digital drawings," he muses. "It was easy and fast, \$>>







MY WORLD

"When I'm painting, I just let it flow."

The feather-headed girl, bearing a fish in a bowl, a hunting bird and a mobile phone, looks like a glimpse of a strange and ominous future. It suggests an epic story, yet it's not entirely the product of a conscious effort to impress. "Most of my images don't have long stories to them," concedes Kuang. "They usually have a scene or hint of a story. However 'My World' is even more vague and abstract than usual!"

In this case, the gaps invoke a sense of curiosity. Kuang depicts his world with intricate detail but leaves the meaning to the viewer. "This image is very free. The date period, space, background and character are all made up." he adds. "There are certain elements in it that even I cannot explain. But this is the effect I wanted." Still you can't help but beer closer and wonder.



AUTUMN
Can you hear from so far away,
a broken fairly is recting an
autumn's song with her heart.

Imagine IX March 2006

and I loved the brushes. They seemed so real! I've been working digitally for five years now."

Today, Kuang lives and works in Beijing, as an art director for an online game company. He's in charge of character and environmental illustrations and concept designs, but speaks of his work with characteristic modesty: "I'm pretty satisfied with the characters. The environments are at the experimental stage, but I feel I did them quite well."

Not having been drilled in the traditional school, Kuang took to the new media with relish, but he still kicks things off with a pencil: "I love sketching with pencils, so usually I draw plenty of studies." This gives the artist a chance to work out the details of an environment.

"Pieces that will be coloured are sketched with a blue pencil first and then the lines are further defined by a 2B pencil." Then the studies are scanned and completed digitally. Although he has obviously got the technical aspects locked down, Kuang is aware that Painter skills alone do not make an artist.

A WISE IDEA

"Foundations are important, but on their own they accomplish nothing. It's the ideas that matter," he stresses. Of course, it is important to strike a balance: "Even if you have the best ideas in the world, you won't be able to communicate them without the basic hand-to-eye skills. Whenever I'm free, I try to practise as much as I can, with figures, perspectives and colours."

There is no denying that we all need a certain amount of technical polish, but as Kuang points out: "If there is only technical strength and you draw every image like a photograph, then you might as well become a photographer."

66 Game development isn't all it could be in China. There are lots of people unsure of their direction. It's a messy crowd 99





PATRICK JANICKE

The concept artist behind Blade and Stargate talks about "taking real life and making it just that bit more fantastic."

roducing "fantastic contraptions" for Hollywood blockbusters such as Stargate, Blade and The Fantastic Four can be tough, says Patrick Jānicke. When you're working, it's flat out: "There's a lot of pressure because there's never any time for you to sit around. As an illustrator you work 10 hours a day, every day." But Patrick's hours are spent designing freeze guns, space rockets and high tech laboratories, that cause slack-jawed amazement in all who witness them. It could be a lot worse.

The problem is a familiar one: "You always wonder – is my work any good? The answer is, 'yes, it's totally amazing' but that doesn't stop the nagging fear. You're only as good as your last laser canon or Pharonic space station." Welcome to the world of the Hollywood concent artist.

Patrick originally trained as a product designer in his native Berlin, but his styling was too radical. "I designed this crazy boombox once - this big cylinder that looked almost like a bazooka. It was what people here would call 'bling-bling' - all black and gold," he smiles. Berlin in the late 80s was into Bauhaus minimalist

chic, so boomboxes were frowned upon.
"They said, 'You should go to Disney land
or something. The funny thing is, a few
years later Philips came out with a
boombox just like mine!"

He recalls: "I was so bored. I wanted to quit and go study film making and become a director." Being just 18, Patrick was too young, so he toughed it out. "But I liked it better once I was deeper into it, once I learned to draw better and make models." In hindsight, those skills led to Hollywood. "I understand now. But at the time I was rebellious. I wanted to design things that were more eye-catching."

STYLE

Now, the artist behind Arnie's Batman and Robin's freeze gun is unafraid of conforming to type. "If it comes to designing a weapon or a car, I like the hard edged, almost brutal approach. I like things that are strong, angular and masculine." Striking, but designed to be hyper real. This was his attitude with Blade 1 – a real guy, a limited budget, with maximum vampire body counts and best on-screen wow effect. "I designed this

crossbow to shoot silver stakes that go through a vampire's heart," he enthuses.

"I like that aesthetic. You try to come from the real-life industrial design approach – then tweak it and make it just that bit more fantastic." Amen.

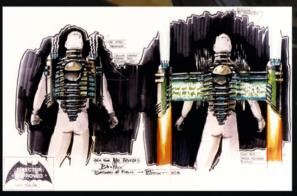
Patrick first headed to the US intent on being a product designer. The turning point was his mentoring by the legendary Syd Mead, the visionary designer behind Blade Runner and Aliens. The transition to movie concept artist wasn't easy, the artist admits. "I had to seek people out and ask how they got there. I had to knock on doors." He totally restarted his portfolio and came up with concepts for castles, drawings of monsters and spaceships. Patrick got his first break with Syd, on Stargate. He singles out one practical element as a 'breakthrough' point: "You do a line drawing, then Xerox it so the lines become black and high contrast. Then scan the Xerox into Photoshop and put it on a multiply mode layer above everything else." Patrick reckons this is a common and versatile technique. "It works like a clear acetate. You can paint under it and it will be like a spine for the drawing." He prefers working with

SHINY THINGS

Patrick's work centres on darkly menacing future-tech. It's the kind of superhero and super-villain machinery that comes with a serious health warning. "But that's not really me," he claims. "It's somehow something that just happened. I always enjoyed sci-fi movies. I never read the books though." What is he most proud of? "The freeze gun I designed for Mister Freeze in Batman & Robin. And the Blade Bike, because I love motorcycles." He's a comic buff too, of the European variety: "Like Tintin. They actually tell stories."

textures from the real world, shrugging: "I only have a tiny A5 tablet anyway."

His sci-fi movie capers involve desires to make things the world isn't ready for. As



MR FREEZE
One of Patrick's ideas for
Mr Freeze's rocket pack
from Batman and Robin



FANTASTIC FOUR IMAGES

Patricks original vision for the film involved a 60s retro, Jack Karby feel: Anyone who's seen the moving will know this didn't quite pan out," he says. Visit his website at wew.productionillustration.com for a look at his concerdesigns for the original 2000 production and more art from the 2004 release.



THE FANTASTIC FOUR

Tooling up Mister Fantastic

Patrick's website has two entries for the Fantastic Four. The first attempt to make the movie was aborted in favour of Spiderman. This left Patrick and production designer Bill Bowes "totally bummed." It finally returned in 2004. "I wanted it to have the Jack Kirby style, I wanted it to look 60s retro. I'm always up for doing cool retro stuff," he says. Anyone who's seen the movie will know this didn't culte pan out.

didn't quite pan out.

"They had only six weeks of pre-production in LA so they hired six or eight guys," explains the artist. There was something of a creative free for all. "The storyboard guy would come up with landscapes or the 30 guy would produce a room, then I'd pick a viewpoint and use the print out of his model to draw on." The Job description is kind of vague, Patrick confesses.

Mister Fantastic has Patrick to thank for his lab atop the Baxter building, or part of it at least. "First I did this transformation chamber, kind of like an enlarged phone booth," he reveals. "You go in as a human and come out with super powers." He also had a hand in Or Doom's monitor desk, but says: "It looked different from my drawings."

The concept artist's curse is to work two or three years before a movie hits the cinema, then be the unsung hero. "Concept designers often get forgotten when it comes to getting credits." Not by us.

he likes making golden boomboxes and killer motorbikes, he gets asked to do them repeatedly. But sighs: "I can't have my mom watch the movies I work on!"

DRAWING ON EXPERIENCE

Patrick's illustrations have a beautifully hand-made quality. This is where he gets his professional kicks. "I really love to do line drawings where inks run into each other and look messy. I prefer when you can see that the paper has a tooth to it and the pencil is a little rough." He believes digital is dangerous: "Illustrators, if they use Photoshop too much, they loose their style. It's getting harder for me to recognise the work of my peers." While he accepts it offers huge advantages, it brings risks, and horrible standardisations in style. The trick is to take just what you need, not to become reliant. "The artwork on sci-fi and fantasy movies is often spectacular. Many times on a job I see more beautiful work on the walls there than in any gallery."

What makes an artist like Patrick so important is that his vision is his own. He's suited to sci-fi, but not because he's copied the textbook method for designing space aliens. It's because he hasn't.

66 In Berlin, I designed this crazy boombox once... They said 'Go to Disney land or something' 99



Artist PROFILE

Patrick Jänicke



AGE: 39
COUNTRY: US
FAVOURITE
ARTISTS: Christian

Lorenz Scheurer, Syd Mead, Rene Magritte, Stephan Martiniere, Tom Johnson FAYOURITE FILM/SCENE: Blade Runner, for design SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop EMAIL: patrick @ fameland.com



Kerem Beyit

LOCATION: Turkey

WEB: http://kerembeyit.gfxartist.com/ EMAIL: kerembeyit@hotmail.com JOB: Concept designer, Céidot Studios



Kerem takes us way back:
"When I was a little boy, I
was in the barber and
waiting for my turn. I was so
bored. So my dad bought

me an issue of Conan." Savage Sword of Conan, in fact..." istill remember the cover art. I think that was the first spark." The artist was Bob Larkin. "I'd love to thank him," muses Kerem. He works in Photoshop 7 and CS2.

WHITE TIGER CLAN This character was designed by Kerem for the game, Sovereign Symphony.

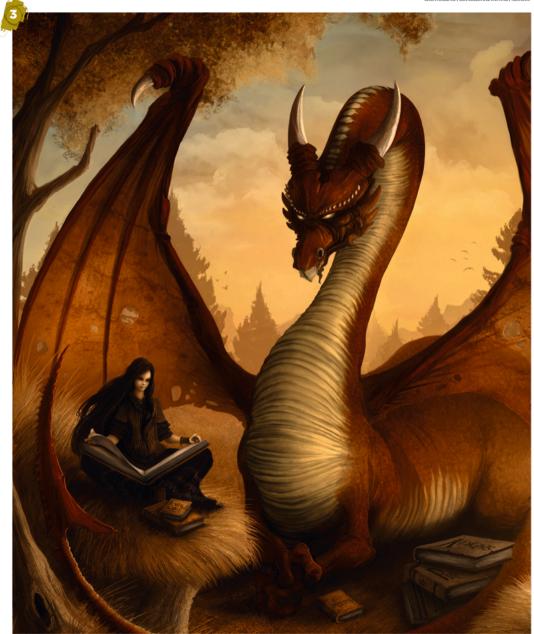
QGALON CITY This architectural design was a concept illustration also produced for Sovereign Symphony. Kerem used Photoshop and a Wacom Cintiq 21UX.

THE DWELLERS OF THE RED FOREST Made for The Catalogue Of Fantastic Literature, from Phoenix Publishing, this one took 30 hours.













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Anthony Scott Waters

LOCATION: US

WEB: www.thinktankstudios.com

EMAIL: bightmei@thinktankstudios.com

JOB: Freelance concept designer



Anthony began as a pro by doing illustrations for Encarta, (Microsoft's CD encyclopaedia) back in

1992. "It wasn't until 1997 that I could claim to be making my living entirely from the generation of fantasy art," he says. In 2000, Anthony convinced his art director, Dana Knutson, to let him try producing his Magic art assignments digitally "I owe my career as a digital artist to Dana. I've been happily exploring this new form of media ever since." Anthony works in Photoshop 6 and Painter 8, with an Apple G4 dual 500, on 05 9.1.

HINDER "This piece was commissioned to illustrate a spell countering another spell so thoroughly that the opponent's memory is temporarily wiped clean," Anthony explains. "If you look closely you see the blue glyphs forcing the black ones out of the back of the caster's head."

LIVING HIVE "I rarely turn down the chance to draw something weird," admits Anthony. "This is a massive creature made up of millions of bugs."







Edward Lee

LOCATION: US
WEB: www.edleeart.com
EMAIL: edleeart@hotmail.com
JOB: Freelance concept artist



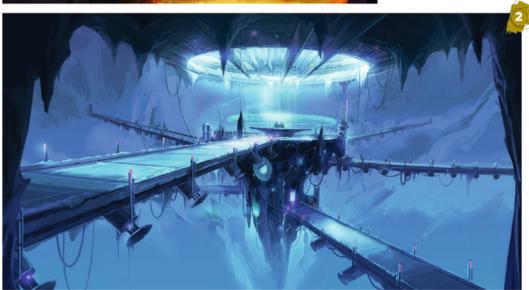
Ed trained as a fine art illustrator at the famous Pratt Institute, in New York. "But I soon fell into the animation business,

designing characters and backgrounds for a television series," he says. Ed was first exposed to computer graphics in the 80s, but says: "I moved out to Los Angeles and got a job as a production designer at Rhythm and Hues. That forever changed how I looked at 3D." It was from here that Ed really took hold of Painter, Photoshop and 3ds max to bring his visions to life.

NZXT Created to accompany a print dd, for a company manufacturing PC gaming machines. "This one portrays an axe-wielding bad-ass leading an army over a fiery lava field." 3ds max, Photoshop and Painter were used.

CICE CAVE The concept art for ATI's ad, Ruby, depicts a "special headquarters set in an ice-cave."

Created with Photoshop and Painter.



Imagine Workshops

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PAGES OF
TUITION

The software and files you need to complete this month's workshops...



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library for every occasion

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If your DVD is missing please consult your newsagent



Martin Bland



DVD Assets

Photoshop

CALYPTIC DNS

Step aboard Martin Bland's tour of how to paint chilling scenes in Photoshop, from concept sketch to final print-ready image...

ainting is something that takes practice, but if you have artistic ability, Photoshop offers up an exciting medium that is not only cleaner than traditional methods, but saves you time too. That's probably why it's the choice of conceptual artists worldwide.

This tutorial lays out the techniques you need to create full scenes, using nothing more than your imagination, Photoshop's default brushes and a graphics tablet with pressure sensitivity.

To start with, you need to know what you're going to paint. The more time you put into planning, the less time you spend painting, and you lessen the chance of mistakes. For this image, I had a good idea what to paint beforehand. I was given the final size and I had a few of my own similar paintings to go on as a style guide.

Use a brief and have a strong idea before going into the image. You can form your concept in a number of ways, either thumbnail (paint a number of tiny sketches to test out composition and colour) or go straight in with a full sketch and then you can complete an image if you're happy with your sketch.

I'm usually too impatient to work on 10 thumbnails, so I prefer to go straight in with a full sketch, then, if it doesn't work, I only lose an hour, but if it does work, I gain that time I would have used in planning. This keeps things fluid and interesting for me. Besides, the more full sketches you do, the better you get through practice.



In depth Apocalyptic visions



A blank canvas

Jalways start out with the finalsized canvas, set to 72 DPI (in this case at 480x290mm) and block in a background with a large hard round paintbrush. Set the brush to opacity (everything unticked in the Brushes palette and the Opacity and Flow controls set to Pen Pressure in Other Dynamics).

With this being a wide-format image, Iwant to break up the horizontal feel, so I decide on a sweeping horizon. I'm going for a dark scene, so the colours I'm planning on will reflect this. The black background is a good base for this style and the green hue gives it more of a fantasy theme.

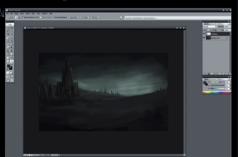
The environment layer
J creat a new layer for the next part.
I usually stick to just a few editable layers
for easy handling later on. Be careful,

because it's easy to keep adding until you have hundreds of layers, but it bloats out the psd and is unnecessary. Keep it simple and it'll stay that way. As I plan to add a character to the right, I need to balance it

PRO

A whole

different times of the day and in different lighting conditions before calling it complete. If you work in natural daylight, you'll be surprised how different it looks at night. The other way around, you'll probably find your image looks too dark the next day. This is a good way to spot mistakes and way to spot mistakes and



out, so I decide to paint in a building on the left.

Introducing a few background areas gives the image an illusion of depth which can be added to later. I use the same settings as before, but change the brush size from large to small as I go, because it's better to block in larger areas and then tighten them up with smaller brushes. This is our basic environment.



The character layer

The third layer is for the character. I block in his basic shape in black and add a grey highlight area with his basic features. I bring him forward to give more depth to the image, because I want him to be the main focal point, while also balancing him with the building to the left.

I want to guide the eye around the image so a strong character up front will grab the attention, while the secondary point will fade back, before merging into the horizon.

Secondary character still working on the character layer, I start work on the features, general colours and lighting direction. Keeping things loose, and still working with the standard hard round brush, I build up body form and add the secondary character.

As I have chosen the theme of Aegis the Protector, having someone fragile in the scene adds more of an emotional element. It's always good to portray a story or plot in your image because this provides more interest for the viewer.





Adding details

Next, I create a detail laver, for tightening up and adding more areas of interest. The rock wall in the foreground fills the area of negative space and places more attention onto the main character. Think about how your image composition flows and flip your image horizontally (Image> Rotate>Flip canvas horizontally) These are good habits to get into. If you're right-handed you'll probably have a natural tendency to skew the image slightly to the right, and vice versa if you're left-handed. When you view your image flipped, you can counteract that problem and fix any errors. This trick is particularly useful when doing portrait shots.

Sketch finished

The sketch stage is over. I took around 45 minutes to get this far, but don't be surprised if it takes longer. Two hours would be a good cut-off point before deciding on whether you want to work on it further. Once you get to this stage, and you are happy with what you've done so far, it's time to enlarge the image. I change the DPI from 72 to 300, without touching the physical image size. This gives a print-ready size to work with, while keeping my original dimensions intact.



Workshops

PRO SECRETS

Neutral start

background from the default to something neutral that's easier on your all parties as 90 per cent black background to frame my work as I paint, because there's nothing worse there's nothing worse than dealing with low-contrast shadows close to a bright white background. To do this, select your foreground colour, choose the Paint Bucket tool and hold Shift while clicking on



Rendering

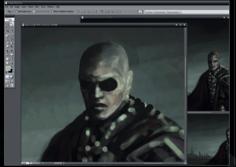
Now comes the rendering stage, where you zoom in and do the same thing over the top of what you have, gradually building up detail levels as you go. I usually start with my focal point – the main characters face – and zoom in to 100 per cent to render up his features.

I have kept a copy of the sketch open to use as a reference, to ensure I don't lose the original feel as I progress. I open a new window for my image (Windows-Arranges-New window for 'filename', sed). This enables me to see the whole image with one click, rather than have to zoom in and out constantly to see what I'm doing. This is why the two background images are in there. Usually I'd drag them onto my second monitor, because with CS2 I can drag windows outside the boundaries of the program. This is a great tip for dual monitor users.



Cifelike features

I block in his features, roughly, with the same hard round brush. To give him a bit more life and prevent the image from becoming too monotone, I use warm shades over the highlighted areas (pinks, reds and browns) with cool shades in the shadowed areas (blues and purples), over the top of the basic skintone colour that the lighting has



given me (green and yellow tones). Although this is a muted scene as far as colour goes, it's important to add variance to make it a believable scene. Flipping my image at this stage helps with the proportions and positioning of his facial features.

Realistic lighting

Moving down the main character, I do the same thing with his shoulder armour and jewellery, painting over the top and generally tightening it up. It is my focal point, so I want to render this small area first, to judge how the lighting affects the rest of the scene. I consider how the light will react to different surfaces. His dull bronze armour reflects less light than his jewellery and marginally less than his skin.



Background

With my focal point in place, I begin to fill out the scene by roughly rendering the building. For the straight lines, I turn off Opacity in the Brush settings (untick Other Dynamics), click at my starting point, hold down shift and click again where I want my line to end, giving me a perfect straight edge. Using less contrast on the building than the focal point gives a better feeling of depth, because the further away something gets the less vibrant it becomes.



Smoothing out

Carrying on from the last step, I continue to smooth out the form of my main building and begin tightening the



outlines of the background cityscape. I start to work a little on the ground, using the Smudge tool (set to opacity, the same as my brishes) and a large soft airbrush. I smooth out the roughness and remove any visible brushmarks left behind from my sketch, using the Colour Picker and picking up tones from the ground as I go.

With the Smudge tool, I then make horizontal sweeps across the image, closer together at the back and moving further apart as I come forward. This gives an uneven appearance that works better than if you were to use a brush and paint shadows and highlights.

Fluffy sky

Next. I move to the background layer and apply a similar method to smooth out the sky. First, I choose a large, hard round smudge (about 100pt) and drag it around a little using small strokes, but just enough to nudge the pixels into large tufts.



It's time to move in with the airbrush. This process removes the roughness of the sketch and gives your sky a more fluffy look. Most of this work will eventually get painted over, but it gives you more control over cloud formations than if you started on a very smooth gradient. If you zoom in 100 per cent, you can see the rough areas that need to be fixed.

Once I have completed a basic sky, I go over it with a large soft-edged brush, set to opacity again, picking up colours from the background and generally smoothing things out.

In depth Apocalyptic visions

Tufts of cloud

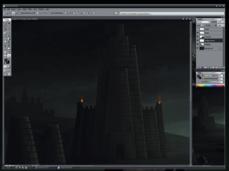
J select a hard round smudge tool of 60pt to start work on the clouds. I gently move little areas around, creating small tufts to give the illusion of a cloud formation. I zoom out to 50 per cent for this, so I can see the whole sky.

It takes a little while before you see your formation in place, but once you're happy, zoom in to 100 per cent and repeat the process with a smaller smudge (around 20pt) and tidy up the edges. Small strokes will create realistic-looking tufts of cloud. You can spend as little or as long as you like on this stage, but with a little more patience you can create dramatic skies.



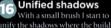
Perfect face

Now my background has gone through a full rendering pass, I move back onto my main focal point – the characters. I start by getting the girl's face in place, because it's an integral part of the image. I decide it's necessary to get her finished before moving onto anything else. I prefer to flit between areas, painting small pieces at a time, because it helps to bring the image together as a whole and unify the lighting and mood.



Adding texture

Back to my main building. It's time to give it some texture. Using a small 3-5pt brush, I start painting in some brickwork using a dark colour, which I choose from my shadowed area to the left. This breaks up the flatness that had let down the illustration until this point. The result is an image with more life. Once my brickwork is in place, I pick out highlights in the same way as before, but use the lightest colour on the building.



with a small brush I start to unify the shadows where the building meets the ground. I adopt horizontal strokes, to add more detail to the ground and make the buildings look more naturally placed in the environment. I bring the sky and background together with a large



soft airbrush, painting delicately over the horizon and making it lighter as it goes back.

Finishing off

Finally, I return to the characters and render the cloth surrounding them. I pay close attention at this stage to the contrasts. For this stage, it's worth zooming right in and using one colour as your darkest shadow. Never use pure black because it's the most difficult shade to judge. Besides, while it might look good on one screen, on another you can almost guarantee it will stick out.

I check over my work and remove any streaks of colour that should not be there then I unify my shadows. I start to add the finishing touches of detail to bring the image together, for example, the rock wall in the foreground, small stones on the floor and the wishing well.

We're now really close to completion. I decide that the only things I need to add are some more debris and blowing leaves to give it more atmosphere. I create these leaves by simply blocking in leaf shapes and using the Motion Blur filter to give them a little 'movement.' And of course, I finish off his sword.

And of course, I finish off his sword.









Workshops



Rough sketch

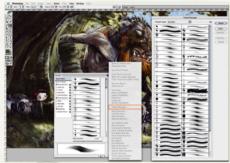
At this stage, I begin to sketch digitally, using the Conte Pencil brush, which is one of Photoshop's Dry Media brushes. This gives a lovely line and the sketch has a real pencil look. Then I create another layer below the sketch and work on ideas for lighting in greyscale. I use Photoshop's Chalk brushes for this stage, but with Opacity set to Pen Pressure.

Laying down the base colours

Once I've got a better idea of the tonal values in the composition, I start laving down some quick colour. I create a new layer above the line drawing, set the Blend mode to Overlay and slap some colour down with a big hard round brush. This is just to lay down a basic palette. Then I create another layer and start painting over the line drawing with more opaque marks. This will become my main colour layer. At this stage I'm only concerned with the colours and I don't give a great deal of thought to brush marks or texture.

Thinking about brushes Photoshop provides a huge variety of default brushes. With the tools available, the number of possibilities to create new ones is bewildering. I think it's a good idea, particularly if an artist is new to Photoshop, to look at other digital





Thortcuts Decrease and increase brush hardness Shift + { or } (Mac and PC) This can be quicker than swapping brushes when working with the basic brush tips

PRO SECRETS

with some traditional

media? You can obtain

Scanning

textures Fancy getting messy artists who use the software and analyse their brushes and techniques. Some artists even provide downloadable brush libraries. I create brushes that excite me and that can make the marks and textures I want in my illustrations. If you experiment with Photoshop's existing brushes you can clarify which ones are useful to you.

Editing the Brushes palette

When I'm creating a new brushes palette, I first get rid of all the brushes I don't need. There's no point scrolling through endless brushes that I never use. It's worth loading up all Photoshop's brush libraries and trying out the different brushes and tip shapes. I find the best way of whittling down a brush library is to use the Preset Manager, Open it in the Brushes palette or via the Edit menu, and use it to delete large numbers of brushes at once.

Define brush presets

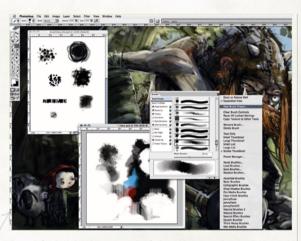
This is where the real fun begins. To make new brushes, I create a new image with a white background and make a wide variety of marks in black and grey, using my existing Photoshop brushes. Once I've got some interesting shapes and textures, I start creating the new brushes. The first step is to drag a marquee







In depth Perfect brushes



down Shift to keep the selection square). Choose Edit>Define Brush Preset. You can either give the brush a name now, or do that later when you're happy with it. Click OK.

Brush tip shape

The next stage is to play with all Photoshop's brush settings until you have a brush that you want to keep. The new brush, created by Define Brush Preset, will be at the bottom of the brushes palette, but it's unlikely that it will make the exact mark you were aiming for. You can tweak them by going to the options at the base of the palette when Brush Tip Shape is selected. The first thing I do is

change the spacing, because this has such a drastic effect on the stroke. Note that you should select brushes from the brush presets if you want the correct settings. Selecting brushes from the Brush Tip Shape menu only switches the tip.

New brush presets

Once you've made changes to a new brush, it needs to be saved again or the changes will be lost when you select another brush preset. Save the new brush by selecting New Brush Preset in the Brushes palette menu. This is usually when I name a brush, because I've had a chance to use it and see what kind of mark it makes on the canvas.

PRO SECRETS

Managing brush palettes

I've mentioned the Preset Manager, but I wanted to reiterate the importance of keeping your brush libraries organised. Think carefully about your workflow and how you use brushes. It can be irritating and time consuming to search for one favourite brush among hundreds of barely used brush presets. Avoid this by using the Preset Manager and the Brushes palette to organise your libraries. I have my favourite and most commonly used brushes at the top of my palette, which makes the task of selecting brushes quick and easy (usually with the button on my Wacom pen). I have several brush libraries for different types of work. Everything is quicker when you're organised.

Q Other dynamics

This section includes the control for opacity, which is probably the most important control in the palette. If you are using a tablet and pen, the opacity control is set here. Try setting the Control option, below the Opacity litter Sider, to Pen Pressure. Moving the slider for Opacity litter can give interesting textures to your brush strokes. If I'm creating new brushes while producing an illustration or concept, I find it can be useful to create a small image to test potential brushes while I tweak settings and sliders.

9 Shape dynamics and scattering

These two sets of options provide lots of scope for experiment. Scattering does exactly what it says, and can make many small brush tips into large sponge-like textured brush strokes. It's worth playing around with all the settings in these two palettes to see how many different brushes can be made from one brush tip shape. Angle Jitter is great for making a brush look more random.

10 A helping hand with texture

Texture can be created by 'textured' looking brush tips combined with some fiddling with the various options in the Brushes palette, but the Texture palette can make even the hard round brush look interesting. There are controls for the scale, mode and depth of the texture, but the most interesting area of this palette is the Texture Picker.



Workshops



Click on the small triangle next to the texture thumbnail for more textures and a further menu for opening other texture libraries. It's great fun trying out different textures with various brushes and you can create brushes to add to the libraries.

11 Dual brush

The Dual Brush option enables you to combine two different brushes with further controls for diameter, spacing, scatter and count. You can create all sorts of texture effects and unusual marks. However there is a drawback – it can slow your brush strokes down because Photoshop has to think about both brushes.

12 Other options
The bottom half of the list in the

The bottom half of the list in the Brushes palette provides a few more controls. Wet Edges can give an interesting watercolour effect, especially when combined with some of the other features mentioned. Smoothing is an



important option. If this box isn't ticked, curved lines that you've drawn quickly can appear as angled lines rather than smooth curves. When I first installed Photoshop 7, I spent one afternoon convinced that something was drastically wrong with my Wacom tablet, because smoothing was unchecked!

Shortculo
Decrease/increase
brush size
[or](Mac and PC)
The brackets alter the current
brush size, in increments,
and work with intuos3
touch strips.



13 Trial and error

Experimentation is the best way to discover the huge capabilities of the Brushes palette. If you can't find a brush you want in the default brushes, create tip shapes and turn them into lovely new brushes – or try adapting existing tips in the Photoshop libraries. I'm always finding incredibly useful new brushes.

Saving a brush library
I have lots of brush libraries, for

I have lots of brush libraries, for drawing or painting. I download some from other artists' websites. Once you've created a few brushes, make sure you save them as a brush library. Choose Save

Brushes from the Brushes palette, which should take you to the Presets folder where you can save them.

15 Finishing touches

I've barely mentioned the progress on the Troll illustration. The tips and techniques described here should be evident in the image. Some of the new brushes I've created have been useful and some will be deleted but most importantly, whenever I need a particular brush, Photoshop's Brushes palette enables me to modify an existing brush to suit my needs or create a new one.





Painter PAINT AIR BATTLE CINESCAPES

PROFILE I **Rvan Church**



DVD Assets

efore beginning a concept sketch or painting for a movie, I usually work with the director and review the script for that particular scene. In the case of this tutorial, the scene is an air battle. To create this illustration twodimensionally, I begin by researching actual aircraft in order to understand their construction, the main features required for flying, their markings, materials and reflective properties. All this research will help me to create

fictional aircraft based on something known and understood.

Ever fancied creating dramatic cinematic scenes like this

air fight? Ryan Church takes the pilot seat...

In this scene, I decide to paint air combat ships fighting across a night sky. In the final composition, the eye will move from left to right with a large aircraft in the foreground contrasting against the light of the background and the rocket exhausts. It will become evident as your eye moves across the frame that a large ship is closing in on a smaller ship, which is itself chasing three other planes farther ahead.

I decide to use smoke and condensation trails (contrails), as well as the light from the rocket ship in the foreground, to move the eye quickly from left to right as the scene unfolds. It is a foreground, a middle ground and a background. In this particular scene, the middle ground depicts large airships in strong one-point perspective. They are of depth and space. The background

In depth Painter IX air battle cinescapes



draws you in, so you then see another large airship and some carefully arranged ground details. This is my favourite type of painting – one that faithfully depicts in detail the aircraft's design, but also illustrates the illusion of speed across a

To save on screen real estate. I set up my workspace with a custom palette so that my tools are easily accessible, while those I won't need, or use rarely, are not in my way. To create a custom palette, just drag a brush variant out of the Brush

motionless frame.





Selector bar and onto the workspace. I customise my own brush variants, using the Brush Creator and the new Brush Control palettes (Window>Brush Controls) and place them in my custom palette. Using both of these features enables me to streamline my workflow and meet my tight deadlines.

For my custom palette, I choose: Digital Airbrush, Square Chalk, Broad Water Brush (from Digital Watercolour), Glow (from F-X), Eraser, Grainy Water (from Blenders) Wet Eraser (from Digital Watercolour), Water Rake (from Blenders), Fine Camel 10 (from Oils) and Croquil Pen 3. I set my work up in Full Screen mode (Command/ctrl-M).

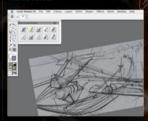
Make a line drawing Once I have an idea of what the director envisages and how that scene is to play out, I begin a line drawing. This loose black and white drawing will be extremely useful. It will be shared with the photographers and set directors to provide them with a visual of the scene, as well as the overall feeling, action and mood that the director is attempting to evoke. A line drawing can be a traditional sketch scanned in and imported or a line drawing sketched in Painter IX using its Natural Media tools and features. Painter IX offers many sketching tools to choose from, along with a large variety of paper textures and colours, such as Artists' Colours, the new default colour set.

Lexperiment with a few rough sketches first, to get a feel of the scene and the objects. Lean restart quickly and easily, but in this case I like one of my initial sketches so I continue to build it up. I begin my line drawing in Painter. Luse a brush or a pen that can switch from a thick to a thin calligraphy line. This gives the same effect as that produced by an artist's pen in a sketchbook. You can find an assortment of pens and

brushes in the Brush Selector bar. It's important at this time to establish perspective lines. These will help place my subject matter into the composition. With this image, the aircraft will be flying through the air quickly, dodging and fighting. The horizon line reflects the angle at which you wish an aircraft to be flying into the scene. It also helps to provide depth of field and the illusion of movement.

I turn my canvas by using the Rotate Page tool in the toolbox (located in the Grabber flyout) and apply a few light lines across the page where I want my horizon line to be. I skew this horizon line to one side, to suggest dynamic space. In this composition, the horizon will curve from the lower left to the upper right. I use the Fine Camel 10 brush (Oils brush category) to fill in light lines in varying base colours of blues and greys. It may take a few tries before you get the lines you want where you want them.

Once I have my look, I create a new layer and go over my sketch with a tight line drawing. This helps me nail down the design more accurately. I check my perspective, tighten up the design and create the template on which my painting will be based.



Block in the scene
I call the blocking-in stage
painting with the lights turned off.' I
apply a tonal value to the canvas. With
Painter, I can alter my canvas colour or
tone by applying a colour overlay. To do
this, I select a colour from my Golour
palette, and go to Effects>Surface
Control>Colour Overlay. I choose
Uniform Colour from the Using list and
leave the default Model at Dye
Concentration. Using a mid-toned
ground further increases the tonal range
of the medium. Whites provide lights and
highlights, while blues, browns, and

Workshops

blacks provide the mid-to-dark and dark tones. The use of toned paper or canvas is a popular technique used predominantly from the 16th to the 19th century in Europe, so seems appropriate.

Because this aircraft battle scene takes place across the evening sky, I want to evoke a certain mood and depth, so I choose a blue-grey tone for the colour overlay. This functions positively as an overall tone for the sky and as a mid-tone for the aircraft. I adjust the opacity to a lower setting so the lines of my drawing become visible through the colour.

On a new layer, I begin blocking in colour and tone with translucent media such as the Detail airbrush, found in the Airbrushes category. This enables me to possible. For this, I select a colour to act as the base for my aircraft, in blue-grey. Using long calligraphy strokes, I fill in the main objects in my composition. I can then go back in easily with the Eraser to clean up some of the lines. When I have the illustration completely blocked in using translucent media, I begin rendering with opaque media, such as Square Chalk, found in the Chalk brush category. By decreasing the Grain on this brush variant (in the General controls of the Brush Creator) I reduce the amount of paper texture showing through.

Work up the air ships
I begin working on the aircraft by
dropping my previous layer and opening
a new one. Given the dramatic and dark
nature of this scene, I choose to build up
my aircraft using mainly monochromatic
colours. At this point I need to decide on



a time of day and establish where my light and shadow will fall. Using an airbrush from the Airbrushes category, I create monochromatic gradations from light to dark on the vehicles and the sky, illustrating the highlights and shadows. This begins to give shape and dimension to the painting, I start to establish forms in the background, such as a faded cityscape and other smaller vehicles.

Airbrushing

Once I've built these objects up, I open a new layer, choose the colours for each of the vehicles and apply them using the Wash brush. I just want a soft hint of colour, so I use the airbrush to block in large simple values. I begin with the smaller planes and establish their

forms using long flowing lines, following the shape of the object. Since this is on a new layer, I can go out of the lines and still go back in and erase without affecting my background.

I complete the basic form, then save and bring up a new layer to begin working on the larger plane that's in the foreground. I find the Glow brush useful for this, because it creates a reflective quality along the top of areas facing the sun and the rocket exhaust. I apply long smooth strokes of graded colours in reds and yellows to create the fiery effect for the rockets.

A dramatic sky

I start work on the background by copying the canvas onto itself. I click Select>All, then Edit>Copy, then Edit>Paste in place. I lower the opacity by moving the Opacity slider on the Layers palette. This enables me to work in smooth uninterrupted strokes. I go back in with my Eraser over the aircraft without removing my work below. On a new layer, I use the Glow brush to create a gradation of warmer colours in the lighter areas, such as oranges, reds and yellows, and cooler colours in the shaded areas, such as grevs and blues.

For clouds, I use the Square Chalk brush with a basic colour palette consisting of whites, greys and blues. I add some warmer tones, such as reds and yellows, to clouds closer to the light source of the rocket to give the impression of reflected light. I block in shapes using quick motions. Using this technique, along with Painter's ability to



In depth Painter IX air battle cinescapes



resize the brush directly on the canvas (hold Command+Option or Ctrl+Alt, and drag the pen on the canvas), I create contrails. They gradually get smaller, from the planes across the sky, implying movement and speed. I continue creating patterns in the sky, applying light and shade to the clouds, depending on where the light sources hit them.

I need a Blender, such as Blur or Diffuse Blur, to smudge the chalk lines and create a more dramatic cloud effect with more shadow and pattern. Using the blending brushes I can push and pull existing colour on the canvas in the same way I would work with traditional oil paints. This creates the realistic painterly effect that clouds have as they fade into the atmosphere.

Once I have established a basic background that I'm happy with, I use the Detail airbrush to create atmosphere and give shape to the composition. I apply light fluid motions to the edges of the canvas to provide depth to the lit and shaded areas. Because of the dramatic light source on the left. I decide to add darker gradations on the right and move to lighter colours the closer I get to the light. This helps to push the clouds into the background.

I pause and step back from the painting. Zooming in and out by using shortcut keys (Command/Ctrl +, to zoom in, and Command/Ctrl - to zoom out) I can ensure I am not overdoing any one particular area and provide a sense of how the scene is coming along. Lalso flip the canvas (Canvas>Rotate Canvas>Flip Canvas Horizontal), to get a mirror image of my painting. These two techniques enable me to check my composition and perspective and gain

Add more details When I have built up the overall composition, I drop the layer, open a new one and get to work on the details. This is what I refer to as 'turning the lights on.' I am careful not to overdo any one

area, because the objects in the background are more out of focus than those in the foreground. I also look for where there might be reflections in the glass and add details to the wings weapons and hull area. I collapse the layers and bring up a new layer whenever I move on to something new, such as placing in accent colours. Once I have a good base of colours and details. I use an airbrush to add more shadows. and the Eraser to remove paint, to bring back the layer below. Building up shadows and highlights brings the aircraft to life.

I add in some darker colours around the areas that I'd expect to get a lot of smoke exhaust. This is not a new vehicle; it needs to look dirty and worn in places, with oil and dust built up over years of flying. There needs to be some oil and dirt around any gun barrel or jet flames, too. The Square Chalk brush is useful for creating this effect, along with an airbrush with a dark blue-black colour.

I continue to build up details. collapsing my previous layer and then creating a new layer with each stage. I use a fine brush to paint the details of the panel lines and paint in some small windows. The panels become smaller at the front of the plane as it is further into the painting. This is where my original back from my image before deciding to tighten any areas that seem messy or need a bit more work.

My final touches are the contrails from the smaller planes flying into the middle ground. They help give perspective to the aircraft in the foreground, but they also





help to lead the eye into the scene. I create a new layer and use the Glow brush for this. I try a few different streaks across the sky to see which one works best. By creating a new layer before doing this, I can make a few attempts without affecting the layer below. Once I like the effect, I drop the layer.

I check to see if I need to go back in and warm up some of the clouds and work finished image. Adding more contrast gives the scene a more cinematic effect. When I feel like I have achieved a balanced dramatic effect, I step away from my finished piece.







DVD Assets

source5(20).ps SOFTWARE:

PROFILE Marta Dahlig COUNTRY Poland CLIENTS: Complex Arts, Poster Lounge, Ballistic Marta has been painting since early childhood. REALISTIC FACE

Marta Dahlig shows you the essentials of face painting, from a basic sketch to final colouring...

t's best to learn a few basic steps if you want to paint a realistic face. Once you've grasped these you should find your images take on a new quality. I will talk you through the creation of this image, called Cherry Blossom, and explain some essentials, such as choosing, mixing and applying colours, and using highlights and shadows.

I will describe differences between particular brushes, their specific

advantages in creating textures and the importance of choosing appropriate ones for every element of your artwork.

To understand the instructions and use the tutorial to its fullest, you should have a basic knowledge of Painter, Photoshop or another painting program, own a tablet and have a general idea of human anatomy.

I have created the tutorial image using Painter 7, with the Tinting brush set imported from Painter 6. However it's

possible to achieve the same effects in any version of Photoshop or Painter, so I have included some tips on painting in those programs.

Remember that there are many ways to achieve certain effects, so you do not need to follow my steps too strictly. There is no one right way to paint. Be creative and feel free to experiment as much as you want. This tutorial is meant as a guideline for you to find your own way of painting.



In depth Paint a realistic face



Shortculs
Undo
Ctri+z (PC)
Apple+z (Mac)
Undos your last move in
Photoshop and Painter.
One of the blessings of
digital painting.

PRO SECRETS

Brushes

shadow, so make the convex areas cast a shadow (dark lines) on the face.

Ideas stage

The key to successful painting can rest on having a good idea to start with, so try to spend at least a few minutes on designing and polishing the concept. Think of the character, suitable colours and atmosphere.

Once you have a clear image of what you want, create a new file. It's best to work in a size that's at least twice that which your picture will be seen in. If your computer is capable, try to paint in print-quality resolutions, of 200/300 DPI or more. Choose a background colour that's not too saturated. Create a layer and sketch the basic look of your character by marking the position and shape of the eyes, nose and lips. It doesn't really matter what tool you use, so choose the ney you feel most comfortable with. We need these lines for a few steps only.

Contours

This step is recommended if you don't feel confident about defining light sources and shading. A human face isn't flat, so using these markings will help you understand its structure. Create two new layers on top of the sketch. On the first one, mark the convex areas of the face (red lines). These include eyebrows, cheeks, nose tip, lips and chin. On the second layer, define highlights according to the chosen light source.

Shading is easiest when you place the light source somewhere in front of your character. In this setting the most convex areas are also the most highlighted. Sketch rays of light (arrows) and mark the lightest areas (irregular white shapes) accordingly. If there is light, there must be



Colour blocking
On a new layer, block out some

colours to use throughout the painting process. Go with the basic round brush from Tinting or a smeary round brush in Tools>Palette Knives (Painter) or choose a hard round brush with varying opacity (Photoshop). Create a new layer under the initial sketch and use your new palette to block out the main skin colour – mid-tone. If you are a beginner, choose a typical flesh colour.

Now apply basic shadows of a tone slightly different to your mid-tone. Use your light source sketch to help you. Don't pay too much attention to the highlights yet. Avoid using airbrushes in Painter or soft round brushes in Photoshop. Also, avoid shading with a darker version of your mid-tone. The human face is made of many colours, so change both the hue and the brightness of your colour. Make it more red, for example. It makes a dramatic difference.

Shadows
Deepen the shad

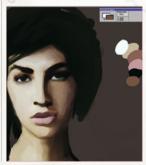
Deepen the shadows, especially around the eyes. For dramatic effects, make a strong contrast between the lightest and darkest areas.



Colour blending Turn off the Sketch layer, using the Eve icon in the Layers palette (Photoshop. or Painter). Don't delete this or the convex and lighting lines though - you never know when you might need them! It's time to start blending all those rough colours. First, soften the rough borders between light and dark areas by applying colours with a low opacity brush on top of the edges. Painter fans can mix colours smoothly with the fantastic Blender brush (Tinting). It saves a lot of trouble and adds texture. Photoshoppers can use a low (15-30 per cent) opacity hard round brush. Avoid the Smear/Smudge tools because they will take away the texture.



Features Continue blending and start marking subtle highlights. A light turquoise applied with a low opacity brush is fantastic for this. The transition between colours should become smoother. Start defining the facial features. Perfect the mouth shape and remember that the upper lip is less convex (darker). Define the eve shapes by marking the upper and lower eyelids. Keep your brushstrokes smooth and tidy. Avoid highlighting skin with pure white because this looks waxy. Try not to define the eyes with dark lines or they will look cartoonish.



Workshops

notoshop Curve

Pay careful attention to the colours. If you feel that the face is missing a shade, add it. Experiment with tones - try adding and blending reds, blues or greens to enrich the colour palette. When you feel you have achieved the skin tone you desire, move on to the next step.

Texture

Your work should now start looking more realistic. In Painter, choose the Blender brush. Alternatively, in Photoshop, pick a speckled brush - these are made of dozens of dots - when they're applied with patience, on a low opacity, they blend perfectly and give a fantastic texture. If you haven't defined the hairstyle for your face, sketch it out now. Do it on a separate layer so you can easily change it later.



Airbrushing Now the transition between colours should be getting quite smooth. After creating enough texture, you can use some non-texture brushes such as an airbrush in Painter or a soft round one in Photoshop. Apply some low opacity strokes to soften the rough areas of the face, but be careful because you can easily make the skin look artificial. You can also add a small round highlight to the iris to give your character some life.



Eye Shape

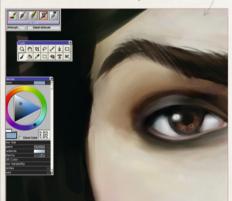
Now let's concentrate on the eyes. An eye is a ball, so both ends of it will be a bit darker than the centre. Dim the corners, especially the outer ones. Sketch out a round iris in a colour. Remember to mark the pupil. Irises are made of dozens of tiny lines spread between their edges and the pupil. Draw them with a small opaque (85-100 per cent) airbrush. Feel free to make some lines darker, lighter or thicker for an interesting effect. Add a small highlight on the upper lid to underline the fact that it's also rounded.

Eye tones

PRO SECRETS

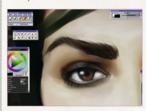
s are one of the penefits of digital ng, but they should a over used. Too layers in your file low down your buter and probably

Spend some time giving the iris further detail - dim it at the edges, add some dots, sparks and hints of other colours. Irises usually consist of a few tones. Then work on the evelids. defining their shape and adding highlights, especially in the middle section. Remember to mark the pink flesh of the eve.



Lashes

Create a new layer and add some. evelashes, using the Airbrush tool. Paint them a bit too long, so you can later soften their edges with a soft eraser. For realistic painting it is crucial to remember the tiniest details. Add a small highlight just outside the inner corner of each eve.



Smoothing Make the tip of the nose seem round by taking an airbrush and applying some shadow on the bottom of it. Highlight it with turquoise at the centre. Smooth the whole nose with Blender and add a subtle highlight.

The lips still need a lot of work. To shade them, use a basic round brush and Blender (Painter) or a hard round brush (Photoshop). Apply shadows to both edges of the lips and give a darker hint at the centre of the lower lip. Add two highlights on both sides of this shadow. Make the centre of the upper lip slightly lighter than the sides.

Attitude

If you want your lips to have more attitude, darken them. To do so, create a layer on top of the lips, run with a pink airbrush over the lips and set the layer's mode to Multiply. If you are satisfied with the mid-tone, it's time to add some texture. With a basic round brush (Painter) or a hard round brush (Photoshop) add some light blocks of colour on the lips. Their size and brightness should vary.





In depth Paint a realistic face



Highlights
With the same brushes selected,

add some lighter blocks on top of the previous ones. This time, make them significantly smaller. Add some highlight to the edge of the upper lip too. You can also lighten up the sides of the lower lip, to give the mouth a natural fresh look.

Moisture

To finish the lips, select a smallsized airbrush, choose a light colour from the pink palette and set the opacity to 50 per cent. Use it over the lips, making a series of small dots. Now enlarge the tip of your airbrush and add some subtle highlights to the lower lip, mostly to the top of areas you have highlighted in the previous step. Now change the colour to turquoise and lighten the edge of the upper lip for a wet look.



Hair layer

It's time to work on the hair. Remember how important it was to sketch it on a separate layer? Change the layer's opacity to around 50 per cent, so it is still visible but not disturbing. Create a new layer on top. In Painter, choose an airbrush or a fine point from Inks; or in Photoshop pick a soft round brush or a low opacity hard round one and set the brush to the chosen colour. Beginners should beware of using black hair because it's hard to texture and to advance highlights or shadows.

Shortculs
Colour Balance
Ctrl+8 (Poc)
Apple+8 (Mac)
A Photoshop shortcut to
the Colour Balance
for Correction
a colour palette.



First, sketch the basic shape of your hair. Try to plan the main wisps carefully and precisely – once you start shading it is hard to fix mistakes. After outlining the flow, pick a colour for the basis of your future highlights. Don't choose anything too vivid yet. The shade should be just a bit lighter than the main hair colour. Apply some thick, half-transparent strands with a big brush, paying more attention to the areas most exposed to the light.

Strands

The secret to painting hair is making it seem detailed, while not painting every single strand. You have to give detail to the visible areas and let others fade into darkness. Painting every bit will make the hair look artificial. Start by adding details and texture. Begin applying darker and thicker strands. Move slowly to lighter and thinner ones. Mark the lightest wisps in the most highlighted places only, or else the hair will look flat.



If you feel it needs more depth, choose a shade darker than the basic hair colour and dim some areas. Blend separate strands with a basic round brush (Painter) or low opacity hard round brush (Photoshop). To create flowing hair with a sense of depth, add some half transparent strands underneath the existing hair.

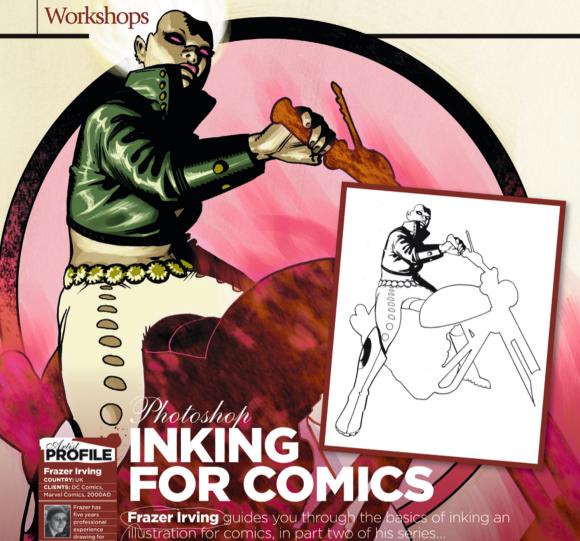
Detail

To finish the hair, paint the background you want. In Photoshop, you can change the skin or hair colour to make everything fit, with the Colour Balance tool. Thanks to this little wonder, you can easily adjust some colours without doing any harm to the existing palette (unlike hue changing).

Final touches

For your image to be successful, the character and background must complement each other. Achieve this by adding an element of the background directly to the foreground. Here, I use some transparent petals and a flower in the woman's hair. Once you have created a full scene, consider yourself done. Take one last critical look at the piece and backup the file on your hard drive.





he is a "firm believer in www.frazerirving.com

DVD Assets

The files you need FILES: Inked biker.tiff SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2 (Demo

nking comics is an art that dates back to long before I was born, but sometime after dinosaurs expired, and it will probably still be here when us lot are just distant memories. The art of inking has become more than just a technical procedure that enables art to be shot and printed. It has evolved into an integral part of the comic book art form.

As with all drawing, inking has its As with all drawing own particular specifics. Quality of line is everything, because the wron line can convey the wrong tone or mood. Clarity is also a key point because the original function of inking was to refine the scribbles of a penciller to a format where the art could be easily read.

For this tutorial I guide you through the stages from blueline, through to

inking with a brush and importing the art into Photoshop, ready for colours. Lam using Windsor & Newton sable brushes along with a G5 Apple Mac

scanner. I have an A3 printer to do all of this. So, without further ado...





Quick technique Inking for comics



A messy business At the start of inking, it's important to know how to hold the brush. I find that holding the brush so that the point dips down almost vertically works best, as it gives the most freedom of movement and thus the most versatile strokes. though variations on this can also work.

Other factors that come into play when inking with a brush are avoiding dipping your hand into puddles of wet ink, sitting up straight, inking on a flat surface at 45 degrees and washing your brush after every hour... There are proper books on the art of inking and if you are new to the idea then you may wish to explore further, but for now I'm going to assume you have a basic working knowledge of the craft.

Holding lines

When inking over a blueline printout (as explained in last issue's tutorial) the trick is to clarify the lines and add weight to them in order to denote shape, form and light. In this case I use what we call 'holding lines' which are simply outlines that are complete. This enables the colour to be 'held' within them. This is generally used to assist with the colouring process (as you will see in next issue's tutorial). Holding lines should vary in weight, as otherwise they can flatten the image, creating an unusual lack of depth.



Weight

Line weight is a key factor in inking, as it is used to show light and to create character. Here, I ink the outline of the bike shape with a mechanical pen because it is an inorganic object and reflects less personality than the flesh or jacket of the girl. Using a ruler, I make straight lines. As the bike is to be filled with colour later on, I keep the weight constant. On the figure, I use slight variations in weight by increasing the pressure on the brush, making heavier lines on the side of the body which is furthest from the light, or where the form needs to be accentuated.

Tired brushes

Inking out

Using the tip of the brush I create marks that resemble short sharp points. This is a method used to suggest a rounded form without being cluttered, as the lines taper into areas of solid shadow. The marks also suggest texture, so I don't use it on areas that are meant to be smooth, though smaller marks are used on the flesh as it does reflect a small amount of texture. Create these marks by placing the brush tip on the paper and carefully inking from thin to thick what we call inking out. Other short tapered lines are used on the hand to show a slight grey tone, although I try to



be sparing with these lines because too much use can make the art look busy and lacking in contrast.

Scanning

I scan the art on my A3 scanner. I scan in b/w mode as a bitmap at 600 DPI. I use the preset contrast settings because they seem fine. Try experimenting to find out what settings best suit you.



Resolution

Once the art is scanned, I open my master document in Photoshop with the original pencil drawing in it and create a new layer, then alter the image size to 600 DPI to match the scan. I select the scanned line art and copy and paste it into the new layer on the master document in Quick Mask mode.



Colour preparation

Once pasted in, I line up the Quick Mask layer with the original drawing, go back to Standard mode and select Invert Selection. I fill the selection with 100 per cent black and lock the layer. Now the line art is ready for colouring!





Workshops



Artist theory LOST EDGES

Mattias Snygg uses his Troll piece as an exercise in leaving out shape details to make your brain see what your eyes don't...

PROFILE

Mattias Snygg
country: Sweden
CLIENTS: White Wolf

Publishing, Wizards of the Coast

Mattias studied painting and sculpture and

concept artist living in Sweden. He works for video game developer, Starbreeze. www.mattiassnygg.com

he is now a

his piece started out as homage to the early 20th century Swedish artist, John Bauer, and his unique take on Scandinavian mythology. Back in his day, artists didn't have to suffer the fangs and horns syndrome that is so prevalent

With his trolls Bauer was more interested in expression and soul than trussing them out in heavyweight spiky

armour and oversized weapons. And that is why they remain such powerful and moving images, even 100 years later.

to Bauer's original design, while giving it my own treatment. I began by making a detailed pencil drawing of the character, then proceeded with a brown ochre background.

At this point, the most important thing is to make the image easy to read. Your eyes should move freely and not get stuck at jarring or confusing details. The sketch should never get in the way of painting; these are two very different things and should be approached accordingly. The light dictates that much of the figure is hidden in shadow, so a

lot of detail from the original sketch gets lost in this process.

An effective way to make a painting easy to read is to find ways to connect the shadow volumes. Look at the left leg of the troll and how its shape merges with the cave opening in the background. We can still make out the leg even though the only things defining its shape are the tip of the shoe and a blob of green. When features are merely hinted at, the brain fills in the blanks, so it doesn't take much for the eye to make sense of seemingly random shapes.

The better part of the face in this piece is hidden in shadow. Once again the shadow areas merge with the background without the slightest hint of outline. The edge is completely lost, but we still feel a face in there.

We can even imagine an expression on the troll, and perhaps because his features are so obscure he takes on life through our imagination.

People often express discomfort at the prospect of simplifying a painting to the point where detailed and interesting areas need to be left out. Far too often this means the details come first at the expense of the composition.

Unfortunately, this results in dense, sprawling paintings without a sense of direction and we can't see the forest for the trees. There's a lot to be gained from connecting shadow areas and consciously directing the viewer's attention with the use of lost edges.



"Far too often the details come first at the expense of the composition."







Adam Benton

COUNTRY: UK

CLIENTS: Scott Foresman Powergen Coors, Britvic, E-on, Visa. Daz3D...



Adam is a freelance illustrator for various sectors in the

design world. He was one of the artists behind indie flick, Star Wars -Revelations, causing an Internet phenomenon www.kromekat.com.

DVD Assets

The files you need are on the DVD FILES:

Bryce_Final_landscape Bryce_Final_landscape.pct Bryce_Landscape_Layers.psd Bryce_Landscape_Tute_Hi.tif City_tile_example.psd SciFi1.jpg

SOFTWARE:

Bryce 5.5 (De Photoshop CS2 (Der

Bryce & Photoshop CITY OF THE FUTURE

Use Bryce and Photoshop to create a vast futuristic cityscape using custom terrain objects. By Adam Benton

ver since Fritz Lang's Metropolis hit the silver screen back in 1927. countless artistic minds have been inspired to create their own visions of huge futuristic cities, where mankind (or otherwise) might live and work one day. One of my favourites, a detailed contemporary example, is George Lucas' vision of Coruscant, a planet entirely covered in city structures

Obviously, creating detail of that scale and versatility requires enormous time,

skill and computer power. As good as the 3D application Bryce is, we won't easily achieve that if we try to be too literal! However, it is possible to suggest something of that scale and grandeur, which is quite often all that is necessary in sci-fi art. In this tutorial, I demonstrate a method I devised previously for a Star-Wars graphic novel, using this kind of large-scale terrain grid formation.

You can make use of an image editor such as Photoshop and Bryce. Although Bryce has limitations compared to today's

more expensive 3D packages, it is still a powerful tool to the sci-fi artist and fantasy artist who wants to realise a landscape relatively quickly. It provides constant versatility with its intuitive sun and atmosphere controls and presets.

You'll find all the files you need to follow this workshop on the ImagineFX DVD. These include the final Bryce scene file, along with my greyscale source images. You'll also find a layered Photoshop document to show you how I added the spacecraft to the scene. Enjoy!

In depth City of the future



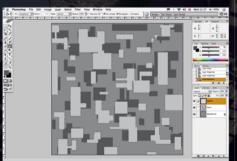


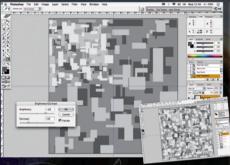
Canvas

The first few stages require an image editor such as Photoshop. The actual city objects are created with Bryce terrains. The greyscale source images are made in the image editor. First, I open Photoshop and create a new document, making it J.024X1,024 pixels, in Greyscale format. Next, I select the Paint Bucket tool and fill the canvas with 50 per cent black. This gives a mid-grey colour as the base tone.

Colour blocks

I use the Rectangular Marquee tool to make random square and rectangular selections (hold down Shift to add to the existing selections). I make sure they are spread roughly evenly across the entire canvas, to cover about a quarter of it. I click on Foreground Colour in the tool bar and make it 75 per cent black. I create a new layer and use the Paint Bucket tool to fill the rectangular selections. I duplicate this layer and rotate it 90°. From the Select menu, I choose Load Selection, delete the current colour and fill with 25 per cent black.





Switch to hand icon in Photoshop, hold down the space bar while clicking and dragging, to change your current tool to a hand icon.

to freely move around a

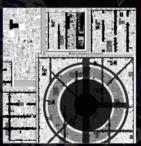
large image

Layers

I merge these two layers together and duplicate the resulting layer. I resize this to about the document size, then change the brightness and contrast of this layer, as shown. I now duplicate this layer three more times, rotating and repositioning each one to fill the other canvas corners. Now hopefully we can see where this is going! It depends on your own taste and requirements as to whether you continue with this merging, duplication and contrast tweaking, according to how much detail you want in your city. You might also decide to add some circular shapes or change the overall levels.

Streets

I make more adjustments to the different levels and add some solid black areas, to appear like deep chasm-like streets. I create a large circular area to add more interest to the main area of my city and I make a number of variations so that when all of them are arranged, the structures look more variable – random, yet planned. When you are happy with these city maps, save them as maximum-quality IPG files.



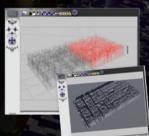


Terrains

In Bryce's Create menu, I choose a Terrain object and select the little [E] next to the terrain object to open the Editor. First, I change the resolution of the terrain up to 1,024 to give more definition. To choose the first image, I go to Editing Toolse Picturess-Load and browse to the first city map. I copy and paste the first image into the second box. I click Apply and click the tick button to leave the editor. Back in the view port. I click Render. As you can see, there is already an interesting-looking structure.

6 Duplication

I don't resize the terrain just yet. I' can'duplicate this terrain using either the menu Copy and Paste commands or the keyboard shortcuts Apple-V (Apple-V (Mac) or Ctrl+V (PC). I press Shift and the Up arrow eight times, to move the second terrain object to the exact edge of the first in the +Z direction.



7 More maps

To load another city map into the first picture box, I open the Editor for this new terrain and repeat the method in Step 5, and so on. Back in the view port, I do another render. By now, you can see how the city is going to shape up. I continue to duplicate the terrains, changing and varying their city map images as I go and then 'tile' them across the X and Z axes.

Workshops

Resolution

As I want the same level of detail throughout my picture, my circular city map is made of 4x1,024 pixel maps in Photoshop, giving me a 2,048x2,048 image map. To retain this detail in the Terrain object, I need to increase its resolution. I duplicate a terrain and enter the Editor again, click on the resolution dropdown and change its value to 2,048. Now I import the larger, circular map and apply it as before.

9 Large scale

Back in the view port, I need to enlarge the terrain object. I click on [A] next to the object and change the X and Z dimensions from 81.92 to 162.84.1 use the Shift and arrow keys again to move the terrain to the edge of the others and do another render. It's really beginning to take on the look of a grand cityscape now!



Objects

I don't want more detail and polygons than are necessary because this will slow the scene down and take longer to render, so I decide roughly what my viewpoint will be, then add just enough terrains to fill my view. I go back through the distant ones and, in the Editor, I reduce their resolution. One in the foreground will be great at 2,048 or 1,024; in the mid background 512 would be ok, with a setting as low as 256 in the more distant areas

You might also want to change the camera's field of view, to get more of a



wide angle effect. I always use the Director camera by default, since I prefer the level of control it offers to rotate around active objects. I double click on the camera navigation ball and change the FOV settings up to 80°. I also like to add some 'banking' to the camera in aerial shots, as it really adds a more dynamic edge to the composition - you can either change this in the same dialogue via the Rotate Z field, or back in the view port via the little button to the left of the camera navigation ball.

Landscape

Right, it's time for some landscape terrains. I foresee this as a coastal city. I want to create a peninsula and coastline curving off from the city into the distance. I create a new terrain object and enter the Editor. There is no point in me trying to explain every step, since it's all done by 'feel' as you go along. I suggest you start with a fractal terrain - click on the little dropdown menu next to Fractal and see what each one looks like. Move the 3D Preview around to get a feel for the terrain. Then it's a matter of subtly. applying small amounts of the effects. (click on, hold and drag left/right). I used some Erosion, Mounds, Subplateau,/ Subcontours and Guassian Edges to taper the terrains down to the sea.



PRO SECRETS Lighting direction

Lighting is essential in creating drama in any image. It can bein to make the most of the detail in your imported model You can often achieve the best look by situating your sun up and behind your model, leaving the nearside in relative darkness. This is where you place some additional lights, to act as reflected or bounced lighting from below and sky light from above

Whole Mountain in my example because it offers green and sandy patches as well as visible coastal sand and rock edges.

Textures

I select the ground Plane, via the Selection palette at the bottom of the screen and apply a water texture to it. I opt for something with no transparency and a subtle amount of bump, then use the transformation tools to increase the frequency of the bump (make it finer see screens) because the scale of this water would make it almost smooth from this distance.

Before I go any further with additional ground terrains, it's wise to group the city blocks, so they can be textured as one. Again from the selection palette, I click on the Terrain icon and choose 'select all of type' from the list. Now I enter the list again and while holding down Shift I click on the last terrain added. This should now exclude it from the selection (grey in the view port). With all the city terrains selected, I click [G] to group them.

Now I can enter the Material Editor as before and apply a single texture to the whole group. In this case I've used a bitmap image, which I made in a similar way to the terrain maps themselves multiple layers of rectangles at different tones of grey. I change the mapping

method to Object Cubic.



Positioning

When you are happy with your terrain, go back to the main view port and use the Move tools in the Edit palette to push the terrain back beyond the city edge. You'll need to scale it all up as well, then probably scale down the Y height to make it more of a range than one buge mountain. Now, click on the little [M] next to the terrain and choose a material. I have chosen

Shortcuts Moving objects In Bryce, use the keyboard arrow keys to nudge objects in the X, Y and Z directions Hold down Shift to double the movement step.





In depth City of the future



Atmosphere
Now it's time to bring the environment to life. The first thing to do is create some atmosphere. I click on the Sky & Fog palette and select the little

Sky & Fog palette and select the little down arrow to open the Sky & Fog presets. I have chosen a simple daytime sky – Monday Sky. This looks okay, but the scale and depth of the scene would really benefit from some careful Fog and

Haze tweaks.

I click the Down arrow at the right end of the Sky & Fog palette and open the Sky Lab. In the atmosphere area, you can experiment with the haze and fog to familiarise yourself with what they both add. Haze really helps in creating the distance in the landscape, while fog can add a natural, low-level mist layer to help with the illusion of height within the scene. I have kept my fog layer quite subtle, below the level of the buildings. I think these two effects are what truly bring redibility to a Bryce landscape.

If you haven't already done so, extendthe coastline into the distance to really take advantage of the haze depth. Simply select your first Terrain, copy and paste a new one and move this further back into the scene. Rotate it around they Y-axis and change the scale as required. I have created the entire landscape this way.

Adding features

Do a full screen render and tweak the atmospheric and sky elements as desired. At this stage I add a couple of Bryce tower models that I had made for a





previous image. To do this, I simply save my scene, open the other document, copy the object I want to add, load my city landscape document again and paste in the object.

Now we have a fine sci-fi city backdrop, but we need a foreground element. Whether you want a dragon, a spaceship or a balloon, you'll probably need to import it from another modelling application, or something such as Poser/Daz Studio. In this case, I am going to use a spaceship model that I have been working on in Cinema 4D. Although it's not quite finished yet (it's missing engines and so on) it will work well from this viewpoint.

16 Importing files

Bryce can import a number of 3D file formats, but most typically the models you can download on various websites will be in the .3ds or .obj format, both of which work well in this application. The .obj format is the format! mostly use to export my own models. Find or create a suitable model, then in Bryce go to Files-Import Object. Navigate to your file and open it.

Now it's just a matter of scaling and positioning your craft using the Edit tools. If the model is a. 3ds from the web, it may already have textures applied and mapped, in which case you might only need to tweak them for colours, bump and specularity. If not, you can do as I have and simply create another texture map (similar to the buildings one) and maybe add some colour markings. You can easily get away with quite a lot if the texture is random and simple.

Render time

Render the scene at your chosen size and resolution. Enable anti-aliasing for a smoother finish. Export the image as a Photoshop or TIFF file. For flexibility in the next step, select your ships, click the Render Options down arrow to the right of the render buttons, select Object Mask and render again. This creates an alpha mask for isolating vehicles from the backdrop in Photoshop.



PRO SECRETS files C

Effects tips using masks

Ctrl+M (PC)

Apple+M (Mac)

Object, Distance and Altitude masks are useful because they enable you to add more localised effects and techniques nost render. Object is used to isolate items, giving more control in layers (blurring the foreground/background objects independently to emphasise focus). Altitude and Distance enable you to play with depth-of-field blurring and they help with adding fog and haze

Alpha masks In Photoshop, open both image

files. Click on the Channels tab, to reveal the RGB values that your image is composed from. Click the arrow to the right of the tabs and select New Channel. Click OK in the dialogue that opens. Copy and paste your alpha mask into this new channel layer. Hold down Command and click on the alpha lavers icon to select the white mask area. Click back on the Layers tab and with your image (background layer) selected, copy and paste. Your ships should be duplicated on their own layer. Now you can tweak colour levels and add in distance blurs, photographic clouds, heat haze, engine exhaust and lights. to be explored in a coming issue!



Imagine K Reviews

The latest digital art software, hardware, books, training and film releases...





Joanna Zhou trials Manga Studio EX 3 on page 102

SOFTWARE

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pixel-packed beta

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A quick, handy tool for turning photos into digital sketches

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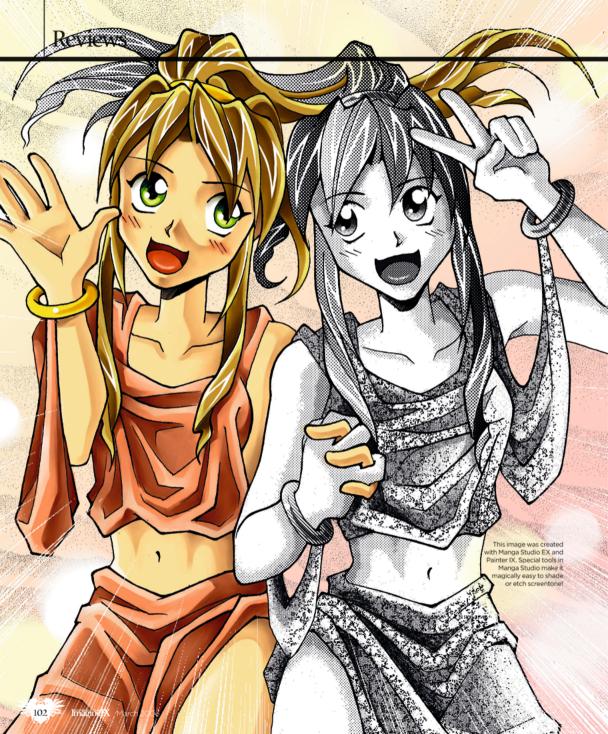
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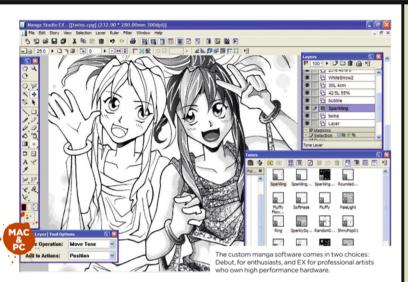
Corpse Bride, Ghost in the Shell 2, Serenity, Grave of the Fireflies



66 There are more capes, boots and leotards than anyone could ever dream of 99



Software Manga Studio EX 3.0



Manga Studio EX 3.0

LONG-AWAITED RELEASE The first Mac-compatible software with essential tools and tones to create digital manga comics from scratch...

PRICE \$199.99 COMPANY E-frontier WEB www.e-frontier.com CONTACT Through website only

MANGA STUDIO

his much-anticipated comic software can finally bring a smile to all digital manga enthusiasts, especially

those with Macs. Available in EX and the significantly cheaper Debut versions, it promises the "all in one solution for creating and

publishing manga."

Its capabilities become apparent upon opening a new page in Manga Studio EX, where you're greeted with a mind-boggling array of paper sizes (preset with bleed and crop). It also boasts eerily-realistic functions for sketching and inking. An ingenious device is the Panel Ruler for creating instant panels and page layouts through click and drage layouts through

Manga Studio EX wins hands-down with its sheer selection of screen tones. You will never run out of rare tones

such as scenery, sky, motifs or patterns, which can otherwise be impossible to create using Photoshop.

One significant drawback is that it's specifically designed for creating a comic from scratch on screen. Many functions are lost on artists who prefer

to sketch and ink by hand. The application is intended for professional use, as indicated by the system and peripheral requirements.

As long as you have the software's recommended computer set-up you will get the most out of this app and it will be money well invested in an

extraordinary program that will give you the edge over all other hobby mangakas.

If you often work by hand or you are just beginning to explore digital screentoning, then Manga Studio Debut is a cost-efficient alternative.



■ Huge variety of 2D/3D brushes, pens, effects ■ Supports mangaspecific multiple layers ■ Easy web/print export

System
Requirements
PC: Windows 98/ME
XP/2000, 500MHz
Pentium processor

Mac: OS X 10.2, 500Mhz G3, 512MB RAM

256MB RAM

ARTIST PROFILE

JOANNA ZHOU

We asked professional manga artist Joanna Zhou what she thinks of Manga Studio...

What do you like the most about Manga Studio?

The huge selection of screentone. I have an obsession with scenery and background tones because they're impossible to create from scratch. I've spent hundreds of pounds buying real scenery tones, so Manga Studio will save me a lot of money.

And your five favourite features? Screentone variety, the Panel Rules function, the Brush tool for painting with tone or imagery, Page and Speech Bubble templates and the Vector option which prevents moiré during resizine.

Had you heard about the software before this release?

Yes, about a year ago. There was quite a buzz on the Sweatdrop forums where people discuss the programs available for creating manga.

Will any other software do?

Perhaps 70 per cent of a basic manga page is achievable using other programs but it takes longer without these specialist tools and shortcuts.

Why would you use Manga Studio instead of Painter or Photoshop?

It's designed for creating manga, giving a huge database of page formats and screentone designs. It ensures you work at the right resolution for manga output. I will still use Painter and Photoshop for colour illustrations.

Is it worth the money?

Manga Studio Debut is reasonably cheap, so worth the investment. Manga Studio EX is clearly aimed at professionals, so you will only get the best out of it if you own high standard graphics equipment (Intuos tablet and large/dual monitors).



Joanna is an award-winning freelance manga artist based in the UK at Sweatdrop Studios. Check out her website below:

www.chocolatepixels.com

Reviews



Expression: Graphic Designer

DIGITAL PAINTING A vector and pixel-based painting package rolled into one... from Microsoft.

PRICE TBC COMPANY Microsoft WEB www.microsoft.com CONTACT 0870 601 0100

he name is misleading. This software, previewed here at beta stage, is a surprisingly powerful and useful tool for digital artists. Microsoft is busy pushing it in the direction of developers wanting to create better interfaces for Vista, but digital artists may remember it from its days at Japanese software company, Creature House. Now you can download it for free (while it's at beta stage) and it's an incredible tool with a mass of amazing features.

Expression GD impresses because it combines the flexibility of vector graphics with the subtlety of painting with pixels. The software differentiates these two ways of working by asking you to work on separate vector and pixel layers - with the toolbox, brush list

and other tools changing contextually as you switch between different kinds of lavers.

The vector tools are excellent. They enable you to paint a sketch quickly on a tablet, then go back and tweak points to get the right shape to your line.

If you're not used to Bézier editing, this may be an unfamiliar way to work, but once mastered it becomes natural. And you can scale your artwork to any size without reducing quality.

Pixel painting is also impressive. While you're not getting the flexibility and brush control of Painter, there are a good amount of brushes on offer. Crucially, you can create your own brushes, too. Several image-editing tools are offered, enabling you to control the usual hue and saturation. and apply a number of effects.





BETA TEST

- Combine vectors and
- Bezier tools ■ Image editing

System Requirements

PC: Windows XP with

BETA SOFTWARE



Eye Candy 5: Nature

NATURE EFFECTS Create all manner of weather effects with Alien Skin's Photoshop plug-in

Price £99 Company Alien Skin Web www.alienskin.com alien-skinfo@alienskin.com Rating & &

This interesting plug-in produces some good effects when applied cautiously. It offers a good postproduction service on your paintings. There are 10 weatherrelated effects: four are new, the others are reincarnated.

When used carefully, Snow Drift does a fast, sterling job of adding a delicate coating of snow to scenes. The older Smoke effect looks convincing and Ripples is decent for water. Fire, Ice and Water Drops look less natural. Corona is handy for adding flares to planets and motion effects, while rust produces interesting textures.

The interface has sliders and a dynamic preview that updates as you adjust settings. Download a demo and see what you think...



This is the latest in a successful line of plug-ins, great for quickly adding postproduction effecs to your paintings.



Software Painting and plug-ins



Sketch Master

SKETCHING PLUG-IN

Photoshop add-on turns photos into line drawings for colouring...

Price \$39.90 Company Redfield Web www.redfieldplugins.com inbox@redfieldplugins.com

Rating & doda

Not all of us have the patience, time or skills to create accurate and engaging portraits - but most of us can access a digital camera.

Sketch Master does a good job of turning a photo into a digital sketch, cheaply, but there's nothing here that Photoshop or Painter can't do.

A quick visit to the Find Edges filter confirms that with a bit of exploration, creating a digital sketch is pretty easy using native tools. However, Sketch Master is made for producing this effect, so it presents everything in a logical, straightforward manner.

The interface provides a large preview, updating dynamically as you tweak the slider settings. Overall, it's a good tool for mocking up a composition or producing a sketch for colouring when you don't have time to draw.



Watercolour, graph and even leather paper are among the options. Sketch Master is a useful, if not essential tool.



Painter Essentials 3

BUDGET PAINTING Want the power of Painter but don't have the cash? There may be a solution...

PRICE £69 COMPANY Corel WEB www.corel.co.uk CONTACT +44 (0) 1628 589801

ast month we looked at Painter 9.1, a tool that is undeniably the best digital painting tool available for any platform. However, power and precision come at a price and for some £300 is too much money to indulge in the full Painter software. This is

where Painter Essentials comes in - being to Painter what Photoshop Elements is to Photoshop.

Essentials Essentials 3 is the latest release, and it offers a lot of art tools for your money. While the application obviously doesn't have the vast range of tools and brushes on offer in Painter, nor the scope to create your own or load in sets, it does have such brushes as Digital Watercolour, the brilliant Artists' Oils and a decent range of pastels, palette knives, pens, crayons and other options. In fact, there are more than 75 brush variants, which adds up to less than £1 each.

Control over these brushes isn't great, however, with only size and opacity really being catered for. Even at this price, you might expect more of a taste of the power of Painter 9.1. A few more options enabling you to tweak certain brush dynamics would be so handy.

If you want to create a painting from your digital shots, then Painter Essentials is aimed at you, and it makes this job easy to do. You can clone an image manually or set up your brushes, hit Play in the Auto Painting palette, sit back and watch your photo turn into a painting. This feature is not really of interest for serious artists, though.

What is of interest is the route into Painter, Support for Wacom tablets (and you may even find this bundled with your tablet) makes it possible to get to grips with digital painting. There's a strong chance that once you've had a taste you'll want to save up for the full version of Painter...







- Auto painting tools

System Requirements

Mac: Mac OSX 10.2.8 • G3

o do do de



Reviews



Alienware **Aurora 5500 R1**

DESKTOP PC It's showy, bulky and goes like the clappers. But does that mean it's the best PC for digital artists?

PRICE £1,300 COMPANY Alienware WEB www.alienware.co.uk CONTACT +44 (0) 800 279 975

othing can quite prepare you for the sheer bulk of an Alienware system. In terms of height, it's not too far removed from an Apple G5 but, in other aspects, it's been chomping away at the hamburgers. Alienware makes no secret that it produces systems designed for gaming. But of course, with such decent specifications they make excellent vehicles for digital artists, too.

Despite the fact that you can build your machine to order, the Aurora 5500 is nowhere near Alienware's best. As a foundation for a digital artist it makes excellent sense until you check out the price. We've seen full systems featuring dual-core processors for hundreds of pounds less.

The combination of the 2.4GHz AMD Athlon 64 4000+, 1GB of memory and an XFX variant of the awesome Nvidia GeForce 7800GTX contribute to what is a very capable system. Because of the industry standard Nvidia SLI specification of the Asus motherboard. it can be upgraded to take a second video card, too. It can even have a faster chip implemented as well.

In our tests it was storming. The industry standard 3DMark05 is designed to test graphical ability and this machine came out with flying colours with a mark of 8,112. It's a capable machine, graphically. This was reflected as we opened some large files in Photoshop CS2 and Painter, They were rendered superbly quickly.

However these abilities do not disguise where the system skimps. Two DVD drives are de rigueur these days, and its absence here screams of costcutting. Similarly, the Microsoft keyboard and mouse are standard fare. The USB mouse lowers the tone, in particular. The video card isn't as sparkling as some (256MB of onboard memory instead of 512MB), while the processor isn't a dual-core variant.

While this is a cracking system that will stand you in good stead for the next few years, there are fully featured systems available more cheaply.

Nisis Easypen G6

GRAPHICS TABLET For digital artists, graphics tablets are a necessity: and this one is a bargain.

Price £74.99 **Company Nisis** Web www.nisis.com Contact sales@nisis.com

Rating & total

A graphics tablet is an essential piece of kit for any digital artist, but getting your hands on one large enough to feel like you've really got enough room to draw can set you back a large wedge of cash. The Nisis Easypen G6 has an area of 9x12-inches. The equivalent tablet from Wacom would set you back around £335.

The tablet isn't exactly aesthetically pleasing, however, and sitting next to a Wacom you begin to realise why this tablet costs so much less. The quality of engineering on the Intuos range is far better than on the Nisis, and the G6's accessories, namely the pen and mouse, feel cheap and easily breakable. Having to stick a battery in the pen is a bit odd, too.

That said, the Easypen does provide a cheap way to get a large tablet. It's easy to set up and easy to configure (even if the Control Panel lacks polish). It has a decent amount of sensitivity and you feel in control of your artwork. If you really can't afford an Intuos and want a tablet that is bigger than say, an A5 Graphire, it's an avenue worth exploring. If only it was compatible with the Mac as well...



- AMD Athlon 64 4000+
- 1GB DDR SDR RAM
- 200MB SATA HD
- XEX NVIDIA GeForce 7800GTX, 256MB
- NEC DVD-RW ND-3540A
- 16x Dual Layer DVD3R/W Recorder
- ■1.44-inch Floppy ■ Windows XP Home Edition

Rating do do do d



It's not the nicest looking tablet in the world, but the Easypen is a cheap, workable alternative to a Wacom.



Reviews



Mythology

CAPED CRUSADER Award-winning book on the DC Comics Art of Alex Ross – expanded edition.

Authors Chip Kidd and Geoff Spear Publisher Titan Books Price £16.99 Web www.titanbooks.com ISBN 1840239417

here was once a little boy who dreamed of nothing else but drawing superheroes and making

comics. This book shows why he chose to never grow up, It's a generous collection of comic illustrations that charts the career and early childhood ambitions of this – now adult – DC Comics artist.

This paperback edition includes 32 extra pages, with some exclusive material from his studio. The accompanying text brings alive the excitement and magic of the myths and fantasies that have won Alex just about every major award in the industry, during his 14-year career.

It shares some of his early childhood superhero art, such as sketches and quirky paper models that he's recently dug out of his loft, all accompanied by commentary that will make you smile.

Superhero junkies and aspiring comic artists will enjoy being navigated through the adornment of characters, comic excerpts, concept sketches and render work, and discovering the artist's influences and stories.

It includes a few good examples of comic story development that can inspire budding comic artists to vary their approach. For example, there's a

glimpse at using live art models and photography for comic creation.

A behind-the-scenes look at

Although this title does offer a snapshot at techniques, bear in mind that the publisher offers better alternative books if it's more in-depth comic art tutorials that you're after.

The collection is seriously Superman heavy, perhaps understandably, but there are also chapters on Batman, Superwoman, the Justice League, plenty of classic heroes

and a few token villains. Finally, there's an enviable bibliography that might just give you some ideas about where to send your own portfolio.

There are more capes, boots and leotards than a seven-year-old boy could dream of. Maybe.

RATING & & &

Further reading...

Cutting-edge, traditional and voyeuristic collections under the 'scope...

Concept Design: Works From 7 LA Entertainment Designers



Authors Belker, Burg, Clyne, Goerner et al

Publisher Design Studio Press

Price £22

Web www.designstudiopress.com

RATING & & & &

A fine series, and an excuse for a lucrative annual reunion by a bunch of college mates with cool jobs. They present 90 professional digital works, plus sketches and text on ideas and techniques (mainly Photoshop). It aims to explore 'creative energy' and push their skills. Francis Ford Coppola gives an introduction.

Aphrodisia: Art of the Female Form



Editor Craig Elliott

Publisher Aristata

Price £16

Web www.aristatapublishing.com

ISBN 0975491229

RATING ADA

Some of the names of the 'jurors' who sit between the pink covers are Frank Frazetta Junior, Greg Hildebrandt, Bud Plant, Joe Chiodo, Craig Elliott and Spencer Davis. They've picked a flamboyant variety of fantasy styles, from conventional erotica to fairies and robots. Plenty of schoolboy voveurism!

Amazona



Author Chris Achilléos

Publisher Titan

Price £14.99

Web www.titanbooks.com

ISBN 1840238933

RATING AD AD AD A

Some previously uncollected artwork from this accomplished, fantasy warriorwoman devotee. This gallery selects from his 30-year history of iconic heavy metal heroines, Conan covers, Amazonian women and recent fetish work. It includes figures in his trademark classical, mythical and gothical styles and a blend of traditional mixed media techniques.



ImagineIX March 2006



Getting started with Corel Painter IX

BEGINNER ADVICE Learn the fundamentals of this essential application with one of the men who created it...

PRICE \$69 COMPANY Lynda.com WEB www.lynda.com CONTACT (+1) 805 646 7076

those new to a digital workflow, can be a daunting prospect.

This is mainly due to its vast feature set - tons of brushes, a zillion palettes and some quite essential tools hidden away in menus. Painter IX, as you'll know if you read our review last issue, is the standard as far as digital art tools go. And if you're serious about digital painting, you need to learn this tool like the

back of your hand.

ainter, for the beginner or

The double-CD set (not a DVD) contains 11 hours of tuition, so it's good value in terms of minute per pound or dollar. And it's neatly organised. There are 14 chapters, each divided into different disciplines within

Painter, such as painting, sketching and working with layers.

painting, customising tools and working with accessories.

The package goes from absolute basics (opening a file, saving) to some

detailed explanations of preferences and how to customise Painter. The tuition is shared by well-known trainer Tanya Staples and Painter co-creator John Derry. While we cannot in any way dismiss the genius of Derry, we sometimes wish he was a tad more enthusiastic.

Obviously the one thing this CD can't give you is talent or

specific techniques. For the latter, flick to our workshops section or buy a DVD from Gnomon (see last issue). As a primer into the powerful natural media software that is Painter, however, this does a grand job.



DETAILS

9. Painting
10. Custom brushes
11. Applying effects
12. Creating mosaics
13. Type and shapes
14. Photoshop files

PAINTER LEGEND

JOHN DERRY

Meet one of the designers who was on the original development team for Painter...

How long have you used Painter? Since 1992, before it was released.

Why did you choose Painter? It chose me.

Any interesting or funny stories? During the early development of Painter, Mark Zimmer and I travelled extensively, visiting end users to solicit their input as to how to improve the product. At a design firm we visited, a designer had made the paint can into an attractive planter!

What are your top five favourite Painter features?

Oils, Image Hose, Smeary Oil Brushes, Custom Variant Palette, Rotate Page.

What are the Painter features that enable you to distinguish your art? Painter's ability to let my own style come through. I believe this single ability distinguishes Painter from other software.

Is it possible to achieve the same results with other digital painting software?

Painter excels at emulating natural media on the computer. No other painting software attempts to delve as deeply into natural media emulation as Painter, so the results will be different. Not necessarily better or worse, just different.

How do you feel about Painter? As one of its 'fathers' it has been very rewarding to watch it grow up and be accepted by artists all over the world. My greatest reward is seeing the amazing variety of art created by it. I love it!



John Derry is one of the original authors of Painter. He lives and works in Kansas, US.

w.corel.com

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Corpse Bride has all the gothic quirkiness and visual delights you'd expect from Tim Burton.



Corpse Bride

ANIMATION Puppetry in motion takes a Tim Burton style dose of all-out gothic goodness...

Distributor Warner Home Video Certificate PG Price £17.99



ontinuing his fashiondefying affair with stopmotion animation, Tim Burton's latest weirdfest

is a riot of hand-crafted invention. He melds the doomy

visuals of illustrator
Edward Gorey with the
all-singing, all-dancing
style of his own previous
animation, The Nightmare
Before Christmas.

Energetically voiced by a starry cast, it's a comic romance that kicks off in a monochrome Victorian world. Meek Victor (Johnny Depp) is on the verge of an arranged marriage when he accidentally places his wedding ring on the finger of the undead corpse bride (Helena Bonham Carter).

Caught between the bland realm of the living and the vibrant, jazzy land of the dead, Victor has to choose whether to love his new life-challenged wife or the shy Victoria (Emily Watson) he was scheduled to marry. The plot dawdles a little while he makes up his mind, but the gorgeous visuals more than compensate for any small flaws. Virtually every character is designed by Burton, to give a charmingly

> nightmarish world where eyeballs pop out of sockets at regular intervals and even the maggots have something to say.

The animation is so beautifully executed it's almost impossible to believe that it isn't CGI. The disc extras give some insight into how this was achieved, with input from the puppet builders and designers.

While some of these extras get caught up in self-congratulatory 'Tim Burton is a genius'

mode, there's still enough to make this a worthwhile purchase for gothicallyminded animation fans.

RATING COMPANY

Other new releases...

Sci-fi feasts include an iconic classic and a futuristic 'western' from Buffy's creator...



The Day The Earth Stood Still

Distributor 20th Century Fox Home

Entertainment Certificate 12

Price £17.99
RATING &n &n &n &n &n

Any self-respecting sci-fi fan should already own this black and white classic. Even so, this release's fascinating feature-length documentary may tempt you to upgrade.

An alien visitor lands his flying saucer in Washington and soon discovers that Earth is riddled with paranoia and violence. To underline his warning that Earthlings must stop their infighting, he neutralises the world's electrical power, bringing it to a standstill.

The film contains some of SF's most iconic imagery, in particular Gort, a towering silver robot (a nightclub doorman,

sweating in a lace-up suit),

and that simple saucer.

Its earnest agenda puts it a cut above rival bugeyed-monster B-movies of its time. While its peace message may seem naive 55 years on, it still remains strangely moving.



Serenity

Distributor Universal Pictures Video

Certificate 15 Price £19.99

RATING AD AD AD AD A

Buffy creator Joss Whedon's movie follows on from his axed TV show, Firefly, but is utterly accessible for newcomers. Curiously mixing the western genre with sci-fi action and a futuristic setting, Whedon skilfully sketches a believable universe, divided between a 'civilised' Alliance and ragged frontier worlds.

The plot centres on River, a girl who has been turned into a psychic killing machine by the Alliance. Now hiding out on the spaceship Serenity, River knows a terrible secret, one the Alliance will kill to protect. Sharp dialogue and the chemistry



between the cast mean you'll fall for Serenity's crew, particularly captain Malcolm Reynolds, an honourable rogue with a hint of Han Solo.

Extras include a fistful of mini features and a director's commentary.

DVDs Film and anime

Continuing the story from the classic original, this is another masterful work.



Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence

ENGLISH DUB New benchmark for Japanese animation.

Studio Production IG Distributor Manga Certificate 15 Price £19.99



host in the Shell 2 has it all: stunningly beautiful animation, a clever plot and a deeper meaning.

Ironically, the only thing it's short on is soul. But make no mistake, you should see this anime. It is truly breathtaking. Despite

truly breathtaking. Despite being a touch impersonal its images remain with you even longer than most live action films.

This power could be thanks to the hauntingly-brilliant music of Kenji Kawai, or the magnificent world-building scenes that Mamoru Oshii is rightly famed for. Peculiarly, it's certainly not due to the characters. The central figure, Batou, never really opens up.

The script neatly follows on from the first film. It's been three years since his partner, Motoko, disappeared into the net, but cybercop Batou is back on duty, investigating a spate of homicidal sex droids loose in the city. It seems these droids have a secret up their synthetic sleeves and finding it out is going to be a real challenge...

Taking as a theme a combination of ontology and identity is an incredibly brave move in an age obsessed with

the skin deep. It's a tribute to the anime audience that this subject matter attracts such interest. Oshii has realised this potential and pointed anime in a direction all its own.

The newly-dubbed English version certainly makes GITS2 easier to watch, but to keep pace with the Japanese dialogue it lacks feeling. Despite its faults, this is an undeniably masterful work from

Production IG. Like most masterpieces, it will take time and context for it to be fully appreciated.

RATING ENERGY ENERGY

Also look at...

A futuristic Samurai adventure and a high-emotion, tear-jerking true story.



Samurai 7

Studio Gonzo

Distributor MVM Certificate E Price £19.99

RATING Control Control

A highly enjoyable futuristic Samurai romp. The animation is superb, the characters endearing and the plot lines keep you gripped. This DVD offers the first four in a series spread across 26 episodes. You'll be itching for the next instalment.

The idea of filling the boots of Akira Kurosawa's fiendishly brilliant Seven Samurai isn't even on the agenda. This isn't a remake, it's a light-hearted and enjoyable adventure, with a borrowed title. It's set in the aftermath of war, as demobbed warriors turn bandit and enslave the simple country folk.

We follow the adventures of three youngsters in the big city searching for Samurai to protect their village from marauding

metal bandits.



Studio Gonzo (Gantz, Burst Angel) delivers animation of a uniformly high standard, enabling the story and characters to shine though. A highly addictive anime with wide audience appeal.



Grave of the Fireflies

Studio Studio Ghibli
Distributor Optimum Releasing

Certificate 12
Price £10

RATING Control of

Set in Japan, post World War II, this true story follows the increasingly desperate struggle for survival of two children orphaned by American incendiary bombers. This is a highly emotional, beautifully animated and haunting film. Seita and his young sister Setsuka have lost their mother, their father is away and their extended family see them as an unwanted burden. The two children take to the street as Japan comes apart at the seams.

The subjects of loss, war and love may not be what we expect from anime but it's all the more affecting for that. The depth of emotion makes this anime powerful. Be prepared to



shed a few tears. The animation is rich with a deep lustrous tone that modern digital animation struggles to reproduce. So much so that you can watch with the sound off and still get a thrill at the graceful images.

IVANA BERODZEDY TENZEDE









TAKE THIS PLACE, FOR INSTANCE. IF I'M EVER GOING TO ESCAPE THIS









WHAT THE HELL?!?

TOAD: LAY OFF BOOKE

SEE POCTOR

GET GIRLFRIEND

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Artists inside this issue...



Martin Bland

"I paint what's deep-seated in my imagination" Page 48



Marta Dahlig

"I can only concentrate on painting in the dark" Page 44



Kuang Hong "When you dream, you're actually still in reality" Page 56



